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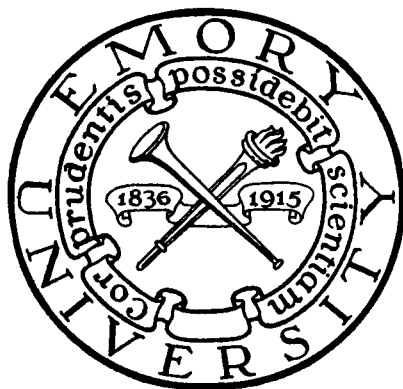
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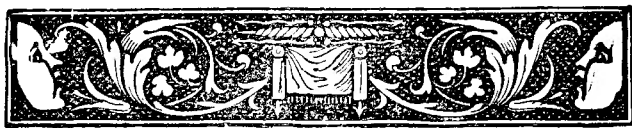
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A RACE FOR A WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BELLE OF THE BALL.

XMINSTER is all alive, simmering, bubbling over with excitement; the magnates or porcelain of Xminster are adjusting ribbons, fitting wreaths, scenting pocket handkerchiefs, stretching gloves, tying white neck-cloths, and otherwise preparing for the momentous evening. The inferior clay of Xminster hover about the gateway of "The George" hotel, in all that exhilaration of spirits that gratuitous sightseeing is wont to produce among the multitude, and while away the time with pipes, flirtation, *al fresco* jigs, and badinage. It is but a

momentary glimpse of some hundred or so of ladies and gentlemen in evening attire that is destined to be the reward of their patience ; but then, you see, Xminster is a town in which the stream of life runs sluggishly. Circuses, conjurors, lecturers, monologue entertainers, etc., are rather shy of Xminster ; the little town is so thoroughly habituated to retiring to rest at an early hour, that even the visits of some of these talented and adventurous beings have failed to tempt the inhabitants to forego their beds or to expend their silver. Such people speak disparagingly of Xminster as a town with no artistic tastes.

But the dullest village in England recognises some two or three occasions in the year on which dreary mirth takes the place of melancholy stagnation. It was not, therefore, likely that Xminster which, in a quiet way, laboured under the impression that it was rather a bright lively go-ahead town than otherwise, should be without its carnivals. They were two : the fair, on which occasion the inferior clay and intermediate earthenware got drunk and did business at intervals for the week ; and the dispensary ball, at which the porcelain portion of the community danced and enjoyed the inestimable privilege of—for two or three hours—breathing the same heated air as the county families. It is the

latter carnival which is at present causing the pulse of Xminster to beat with feverish rapidity, and the population are already waiting to display their critical acumen on the belles of town and country. A noted beauty once said that, though many a compliment had been paid her in her day, none ever equalled that of the murmur which ran through the crowd round "The George" as she descended from her carriage for the Xminster ball, while above it came the shrill exclamation of "What's the use of lamps with such eyes as her'n in the carriage?"

The dear old country fiddles are playing their somewhat superannuated dance-music with all the wonted animation and disregard of the niceties of tune which is so much the characteristic of provincial bands. There is no lack of pretty girls, tastefully dressed, doing their *devoir* in valse and quadrille, in the queer old room with its still queerer attempts at decoration in those gaudy festoons of artificial flowers. But a stately young lady, dressed in white, with green-and-gold trimmings, seems to bear away the palm and utterly eclipse her sister Pleiades. More than one murmured tribute to her beauty escapes the lips of the lookers-on as she whirls by in the Valse or glides in front of them in the Lancers.

"Who is she?—there's not a girl in the room can

hold a candle to her! By Jove, she is handsome! Thoroughbred to the tips of her fingers! She moves like a queen amongst the rest, and they are good-looking girls, too, some of them." And the speaker, a rather coarse-looking dark man, a little the wrong side of thirty, turned for information to the knot of men he was lounging with at the door.

"Haven't you ever seen her before, Pearman? No, I suppose you hardly could have done. She goes out but little—that's Maude Denison."

"What!—daughter of old Denison of Glinn?"

"Just so—former owner of all those fat acres which have since fallen into your respected progenitor's possession;" and a slight inflection of voice just italicised the epithet; for Gus Brisden was of a good old county family, and had little reverence for the Pearmans of Mannersley.

Yes, very handsome was Maude Denison. She was a beauty of the regal order, and her stately carriage alone would have sufficed to make men ask, "Who is she?" even without the rich brown tresses, proud grey eyes, and regular features. She fully warranted the rather coarse encomium of "thoroughbred to the tips of her fingers."

"By Jove, I must know her!" said Pearman. "Can you introduce me, Brisden?"

"No; I barely know her myself; by no means well enough to take such a liberty," replied Gus.

It was hardly the truth, for he did know her, if not intimately, at all events tolerably well; but Brisden had no great opinion of Mr. Samuel Pearman, and still less idea of officiating as his sponsor to handsome Maude Denison.

"'Gad! I must go and find somebody who can;" and Pearman hurried away.

Apparently he was successful, for, shortly afterwards he led out Miss Denison for a quadrille, during which Mr. Pearman did his utmost to make himself agreeable. He was a very earthy piece of clay, by nature coarse and sensual in his habits; but he had enjoyed the advantage of a good education, and was by no means deficient in ability. He had achieved a certain amount of tact while undergoing the friction of such society as he had encountered, and proved himself an apt pupil in worldly knowledge. This stood him in good stead just now. He intuitively subdued his naturally self-assured, boisterous manner, as he talked deferentially to his partner. He had seen much of the world, his remarks on men and manners were amusing, and when he led Maude Denison back to her chaperone she certainly thought he was by no means the least agreeable partner she had had that

evening. She had but just resumed her seat when a tall fair man was by her side. His brow was slightly knit, and his eyes sparkled angrily as he exclaimed, "My dear Maude, how could you dance with that man?"

"Which, Grenville?" inquired Miss Denisor, smiling. "I have danced with a good many to-night, including your sweet self, cousin mine."

"Don't be absurd, Maude; you know very well whom I mean—that dark man—your last partner."

"And wherefore should I not dance with him?" inquired Miss Denisor.

"For a hundred reasons. His name alone should have sufficed to prevent it."

"Dear me," laughed the young lady, merrily. "You have piqued my woman's curiosity. Do tell me who this monster of iniquity is, for, truth to say, I did not catch his name when he was introduced to me. Is he a noted Radical, or murderer, or what? He was rather more amusing than some of the men I have chanced on this evening."

"You didn't know who he was? I thought not. That's young Pearman—the unmitigated cad;" and Grenville Rose pulled his long yellow moustache as some slight solace to his irritation of mind.

"So that was Mr. Pearman, was it?" remarked Maude, musingly. "Well, Grenville, I don't think I

should have danced with him had I known who he was ; but, you see, I didn't, and I cannot see that it is of much consequence now. One is not obliged to recognise the partner of a quadrille again unless one likes, you know ; and though I'll plead guilty to finding him amusing, I don't think I wish to prosecute the acquaintance. But don't you think it is getting time to leave ? Mrs. Learmont, you are as good as gold," said Maude, turning to her chaperone, "waiting in this resigned manner for me. However, I am quite at your disposal now."

"Pray don't think of me ; I want you to thoroughly enjoy your ball, and I am quite willing to look on at your valseing for another hour. I have lots of people to come and talk to me, you know."

"Yes!" laughed Maude ; "I am quite aware that you have lots of old friends, only too glad to have the chance of a quiet chat with you, and know also, that you would sit here and pinch yourself to keep awake sooner than debar your goddaughter of five minutes' gratification ; but I also have a conscience. Perhaps my motives are interested ones, and I am thinking that you might hesitate next time I demand your kind offices if I try you too severely now."

"My dear Maude, you don't surely ——"

"Yes, your dear Maude does surely think that you and she have had enough of this. Go and see about

the carriage, Grenville—will you, please?" And, despite many assaults from young men who produced cards on which her name was pencilled, and pleaded hard for the fulfilment of the contract, Maude Denison steadily refused to dance any more that evening. Grenville Rose saw them to their carriage, but laughingly declined the honour of the back-seat, saying that he should return as he came, in the dogcart, so that no destruction of flounces could be attributed to him.

It is very curious to watch what trifling affairs influence the tenor of our lives. Maude Denison has deemed it of little consequence that she has danced a quadrille with Samuel Pearman; and yet that dance is fated to draw many a tear from the proud grey eyes—to occasion many a bitter tug at her heart-strings. Grenville Rose has refused the back-seat in the roomy old carriage; yet, ere thirty minutes are over, his nerves will be tortured in a way which he is powerless to resist; he will take his seat in the dogcart, with a prevalent impression of having made a fool of himself—than which nothing, perhaps, is more galling to the vanity of man.

The ball is wellnigh over. Men are congregating about the refreshment buffet for another sherry-and-seltzer, while their vehicles are getting ready. They are talking over the evening in the careless way men

are apt to on such occasions. More than one beauty is discussed. It was not likely that the *belle par excellence* should be left out of such converse.

"What a clipper Maude Denison is!" said one young gentleman, somewhat gone in sherry-and-seltzer, and who had achieved nothing but distant adoration of the beauty the whole evening.

"Yes, she is," rejoined another. I never saw such eyes: and can't she valse, just!" He also was indebted to observation for his critical commendation of Maude's dancing. "Ha! here comes Pearman. You can tell us all about her. Lucky dog! I saw you got a dance out of her."

What evil genius put it into Grenville Rose's head to follow Pearman up to the refreshment table I know not; but so it was. "Got a dance out of whom?" inquired the last-mentioned gentleman.

"Why, Maude Denison, the belle of the ball, of course."

"Yes, I was so far lucky. She's a nice girl, that—worth a fellow's while to go in for. Can't have any money, though, I take it."

Grenville Rose ground his teeth hard. What right had these—cads, I fear, would have been his word—to breathe Maude Denison's name?

For once *tempor* got the better of discretion—albeit he was not addicted to foolish actions. "I

don't know whether you are aware, sir," he exclaimed, addressing himself to Pearman, "that the lady you are discussing with such freedom happens to be **my** cousin?"

"I can only congratulate you on such a charming relative," was the unembarrassed reply.

The blood rushed to Grenville's temples, and a fierce impulse to strike the speaker to the ground possessed him; but he felt there was nothing tangible to resent. With a great effort he replied—

"I will merely thank you to speak of her with a little more deference in my presence."

"In the first place," responded Pearman, "I was unaware that there was a relative of the lady present; in the second, I think I merely observed that I had the good fortune of dancing with her, that she was an extremely nice girl, and that he would be a fortunate man who should win her. The supposition that a young lady will be some day married can hardly be deemed insulting."

Grenville bowed, muttered something about thinking it best to announce his kinship ere more should be said, and left the apartment discomfited. Mr. Pearman's modification of his first speech was ingenious, though there was nothing really tangible even in that. Grenville's knuckles literally tingled as he descended the staircase, and he thought

vindictively how it would have conduced to his night's rest to have knocked Pearman down. A burst of distant laughter, as he lit a huge cabana previous to stepping into the dogcart, was not calculated to soothe his irritated feelings. He put that laugh down as at his expense, as men will do whether or no, under such circumstances. He muttered to himself as he drove off, "Right or wrong, Sam Pearman, I hold myself in your debt; and if I don't pay it religiously, shou'd the time ever come, my name is not Grenville Rose." She was a free goer, that little bay mare. Seldom did driver have to call upon her to quicken her pace; as a rule, she trotted as quick as she honestly knew how, but more than once that evening did Grenville lightly draw the whip across her. She could not, you see, trot away from the reflections just behind her; which was, in truth, what she was being asked to do. Many a good horse has had hard justice meted out to him after thiswise. Quick as he came, yet Mrs. Learmont had dropped Maude at Glinn, and the latter had retired to her own room before Grenville Rose, in a far from genial frame of mind, lit his candlestick in the hall. "Sha'n't see her again," he muttered, "before I start. I must go by that cursed early train, hours before there's a chance of anyone being down.

Made a fool of myself with that beast Pearman, into the bargain ;” and, closing his door with an angry slam, Grenville prepared to seek his pillow.

It happens to all of us in our turn. There are so many chances of doing so. You’ve neglected to score your king at *écarté*—you’ve revoked at whist—you have gone too far with Miss Smith—or you have missed an opportunity with pretty Miss Jones, whose father has found out the old alchymist problem, and is transmuting pig iron into ingots with marvellous celerity ; you’ve quarrelled with your dearest friend—wounded your rich aunt on her tenderest point—talked rampant Radicalism before the Conservative member, whose interest you were specially anxious to obtain—unwittingly snubbed an unknown gentleman who turns out to be the editor of the magazine or manager of the theatre that you trust will introduce to the notice of the public, the last spirited effusion of your pen ! Ah me ! it is always so. Rochefoucauld tells us, “ There are people fated to be fools ; they not only commit follies by choice, but are even constrained to do so by fortune.” It is a sad moment that, laying the head upon the pillow with a vivid consciousness of having made a fool of oneself.

It behoveth now that I should give some slight description of the Pearmans of Mannersley, the

younger of whom we have encountered at the Xminster ball.

The sire of the dark-featured young man who had expressed such admiration for Maude Denison had begun life as a solicitor's clerk, from which in due course of time he blossomed forth into an attorney, and sat himself down in the little town of Bury St. Edmunds, with a view to the persecution of mankind or the redressing of his fellow-men's grievances, as circumstances and the presentation of six-and-eight-pence might direct. But it need hardly be observed that that ancient town was already adorned by two or three of the fraternity, and that the older practitioners found no more business going on than they were perfectly competent to cope with. Consequently, Pearman senior found himself in possession of a business very much of the "Sawyer late Nockemorf" type, the annual receipts of which, it may be remembered, could be placed in a wine glass and covered up with a gooseberry leaf,—a balancing of the ledger which represents more portability than profit.

I shall not say, "it may be remembered by the reader," because the "faculty for ignorance" that we all display with reference to geography generally, and that of our own country in particular, is so perfectly marvellous; but the town of Bury St.

Edmunds lies no great distance from the famous Heath of Newmarket. In default of other business, Mr. Pearman took to attending the race meetings thereat; gradually he became acquainted with many of the trainers, jockeys and *hoc omne genus*—those multifarious hangers-on that exist so mystically by racing—hardly, it may be, and as their appearance would indicate; still we see them year after year, and know they follow no other calling. He had naturally an acute understanding; and he now got many a hint as to where to lay out a little money profitably. The first spring meeting became his assizes, the July meeting his sessions. Moreover, the traffickers in horseflesh and followers of the turf have their subjects of litigation as well as those who pursue other avocations. Who was so handy to employ as Pearman? and, by degrees, he began to make a name as a solicitor in horse-cases at the racing metropolis.

The course of business he now followed soon brought him into contact with the leading money-lenders and bill discounters of London. The advantage of being on good terms with them was at once evident to the astute solicitor. Very soon it was bruited about that Sam Pearman was the best counsellor that young gentlemen in difficulties could apply to; that he made better terms with the

usurers than anyone; that he could and did find money for black settling days, supposing there to be anything like negotiable security, with a punctuality that could not be sufficiently commended. Those to whose rescue he had come sung his praises loudly, and chanted pæans at the moderation with which he individually had reft them of their gold. Young gentlemen in difficulties are numerous, and there is seldom any lack of supply regarding the article. Gradually members of "the upper ten," whom more sanguine than prudent speculations had reduced to this category, consulted the attorney anent their necessities. They found him the treasure he had been described. He could not always prevent the usurer claiming his bond, it is true, but he always managed to temporise; and when the pill had to be swallowed, it was nicely gilt outside, after the manner of the chemists of St. James's.

Now, as in the whole of all this business Mr. Pearman never for one instant lost sight of the main point—that whether the transaction might be small or great, whether in hundreds or thousands, the first interest it was his particular duty to attend to was that of Samuel Pearman—I need scarcely say that he gradually waxed rich. Those merciless money-lenders he took good care should let him have very fair pickings off the foolish bones they so

often stripped clean between them ; and finally, he achieved the proud position of being such a necessity that no magnate of the London world whom "plunging " or reckless expenditure had brought to grief deemed it was possible he could be put straight without the intervention of Sam Pearman.

In due course Harold Denison, Maude's father, had passed through his hands. Denison had started in life with a fine property ; but burning the candle, not only at both ends, but a little in the middle besides, he had soon done away with that. Pearman was everything he should be on the occasion ; but when his client emerged from his sea of troubles, two-thirds of the Glinn estate were in the hands of the solicitor. Still, everyone said Denison's had been a very bad break-up ; that the property had been sold at a fair valuation ; and that, but for Pearman, Harold Denison would not have been able to keep Glinn and such acres as were still left to him. By this time Pearman was an owner of racehorses, and kept a stud of his own. He had married a lady in some way connected with usury, and, having altogether acquired a considerable fortune, made the first mistake in his career, and set up for a country gentleman.

He built a big house on the estate so recently lopped off the Glinn property ; he built arge

stables; he laid down a tan-gallop; he filled his cellars with choice wines, and gave Gregory *carte blanche* as to furnishing. He named his house Mannersley, after the manor it stood upon. He established a crest and coat of arms; he had his cards engraved, "Mr. and Mrs. Pearman, Mannersley;" he sat himself down to wait,—but nobody *called*.

Money will do and does do a good deal, but here and there blood respects its rights. The county were not going to welcome what they designated as "a money-grubbing attorney, who was battenning on the necessities of Harold Denison of Glinn." The Master of the Hounds, it was true, called upon him; but even Pearman could regard that in no other light but that of a business transaction. He asked and obtained leave to draw the covers, gave the solicitor a capital luncheon on his return visit, but had steadily refused all invitations to dinner.

In due course of time Mrs. Pearman died. Whether, chagrined at her position not being properly recognised in this world she hurried her departure to another, I cannot say; but some few years after their establishment in Mannersley she was laid in her grave. She left but one son, who at the period of her death was an undergraduate at

Cambridge, but who, now many years older, is the gentleman who danced that quadrille with handsome Maude Denison.

Young Pearman has succeeded far better than his progenitor in making his way in the county. A generation, you see, makes a vast difference. We hob and nob with the son, though we turned our supercilious noses up at the horny hand of the father. It don't do to know Giles the weaver, who made the money, and does not the least know what to do with it; but young Giles, without an idea in his skull beyond the dissipation of the hard-won gear,—ah! that is very different. We sip his claret, at six guineas the dozen, with infinite gusto. I suppose it is a reflex law of nature that the accumulators of wealth should be generally succeeded by the distributors thereof,—a piece of physiological study that might go far to quiet the apprehensions of the secretary of the Board of Trade anent the acquisition of large landed properties in this country.

Samuel the younger, it is almost needless to observe, considering what we know of his progenitors, took to "the turf" as kindly as a young duckling to water. Under his father's guidance, he soon became a valuable coadjutor. He was early indoctrinated into all the mysteries of "milking,"

“roping,” &c.—villanous technicalities with which I will not attempt to bore uninitiated readers further than explaining that they are but so many conjugations of the verb “to rob.” As the father advanced both in years and infirmities, the whole management of the racing stud gradually fell into the son’s hands. Though the old man still took an interest in it, he confined himself pretty much now to the management of his estate, and arranging the affairs of the still numerous “gentlemen in difficulties” that sought his beneficent assistance. Latterly, indeed, on account of his failing health, horses had been entered and run principally in the junior Pearman’s name, though the old gentleman’s counsel was still sought on what should be the tactics of the stable.

Still, although the younger Pearman had insinuated himself to a certain extent into the county society, there were many of the county families who utterly ignored the solicitor’s son. The men of the family might know him in the hunting-field; the younger sons might even go so far as to drop in at Mannersley for lunch, when the hounds or aught else took them that way. But the women tabooed him—they would none of him; and bitterly did Sam Pearman feel that haughty ostracism. All men have their ambitions; Pearman had his father’s in-

tensified, to be acknowledged as within the pale of "the upper ten." He quite understood that the recognition of the racecourse and hunting-field was far from constituting such.

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CHAPTER II.

THE DENISONS OF GLINN.

A FINE old place was Glinn, although it had no pretensions to any very great antiquity : a large pile of brickwork, in the form of a longish parallelogram, relieved on the entrance side by one of those massive pillared porches under which carriages drive and deposit their freight at the low doorway in luxurious comfort, when the eastern gales of an English spring, or the fierce howlings of an autumnal equinox are prevalent in the land. At those times one appreciates the great porch on emerging from one's chariot, as much as a good fire in frosty weather. There is nothing remarkable in the house internally, beyond the open gallery that runs round the inner hall, much after the manner that some hundred years ago galleries were wont to

run round the courtyards of the great coaching inns,—a description of hostelry now so scarce that we know them, one may say, only in pictures. But, externally, the place boasted some beautiful timber. Long stately avenues of lime, elm, and horse-chesnut diverged to three points of the compass. On the western side, looking over the wire fence that bounded the garden, the eye fell upon a perfect sea of laurels, studded with forest trees. Through this wilderness of evergreen had been cut in days lang syne broad vistas, now perfectly turfed over, and on which countless rabbits grazed with the immunity of cherished pets. And yet it was not altogether so: for at the fall of the leaf, stalwart beaters crashed through those laurels; deadly breechloaders swept those grassy rides; and fur and feathers had a hard time of it for a day or two.

In these days of narrowness of means a good bit of the house was shut up. The big drawing-room was rarely opened, except for sanitary purposes, regarding the furniture. Harold Denison, his wife, and daughter, lived in the morning-room, the billiard-room—now, alas! denuded of the green-cloth table—and the dining-room. Denison was an embittered, disappointed man—far too clever not to see how he had thrown the game of life away by the turf follies and extravagances of his early days;

far too proud to take a reduced status in the county in which he had been at one time a leading magnate; far too selfish to sacrifice an iota of that pride to enhance the pleasure of either his wife or his daughter. He had married, early in life, a lady of good family in his own county—a sweet, lovable girl who had ever yielded to his smallest caprice. It had been better for Harold Denison had she been constituted of sterner stuff. She never crossed her husband in word or deed. She wept salt tears in the solitude of her own chamber when the reverses came. She sacrificed her own fortune, as far as she could. She would have immolated herself, if that would have tended to the furtherance of the interests of the man she still loved with all her girlish adoration. That being impossible, after the manner of such women, she sat down and wept again. No word of reproach ever escaped her lips. She gave up her season in London. She murmured not when the pony phaeton was put down. She reduced her milliner's bills to the minimum power; and muddled her poor head in vain attempts to control the expenditure of an arbitrary housekeeper. She was one of those women who seem born to suffer. There are many such, and a brutal husband is usually their destiny. In this respect she was fortunate, for Harold Denison—making all allowance for his

selfish nature—sincerely loved his wife. It grieved him much to curtail the luxuries she had been accustomed to; but it would never have entered his head to commence rigid economy on his side of the ledger.

Maude was their only child, and this perhaps still more fostered the intense selfishness of Mr. Denison's disposition. A girl was, of course, sure to marry. There would, perhaps, be some little difficulty about the *dot*; but that was all. He had none of his stock to come after him; and though he little relished the idea of the Denisons of Glinn being blotted out of the county Red-book, he could not be expected to feel much interest for that boyish nephew he had barely seen. On one point only did poor Mrs. Denison ever venture to contradict her lord's wishes: that was about Maude. The girl was all in all to her mother. Maude's woman's wit had early made her understand that her father dealt but hard justice in that quarter; and she was ever ready to flash forth as her mother's champion. Otherwise she loved her father very dearly, and was quite imbued with the family doctrine of self-sacrifice where he should be concerned.

By the light of a candle, in the solitude of his chamber, Grenville Rose was tasting all the sweets

of dressing to catch an early train on a dark February morning. He had been brought up a great deal with his cousin Maude, being, indeed, a ward of Mr. Denison's. They had romped together as children, and been fast cousinly friends since they had grown bigger. No lovemaking had ever taken place between the pair, yet Grenville was conscious of being very fond of that grey-eyed damsel. If you had asked him, "What, in a cousinly way?" he would have answered, "Yes, of course." If you had suggested, "In a sisterly manner?" he would have hesitated, and said, "Well, not just that; cousins are different, you know." Well, they are; as the old song says:—

" Sisters I have by the dozen, Tom,
But a cousin's a different thing."

Though you and I, reader, might have a suspicion on the subject, it had not yet dawned upon Grenville's mind that he was falling in love with Maude. He couldn't bear her dancing with that beast Pearman, he said to himself; but he did not admit that there were several eligible partners whom Miss Denison had honoured with her hand at the Xminster ball that he had taken almost equal exception to: in fact, as a rule, he had only thoroughly approved such as were married or elderly. Rose was certainly in no position at

present to bethink himself of a wife. A man of five-and-twenty, some eighteen months or so called to the bar, may be said to have a great opening ; but it is an opening, and nothing more. Like the immortal Micawber's opening in the coal trade, it is of a very precarious description, and hardly warrants setting up as a married householder and responsible citizen. And such at present were Grenville's professional prospects. Of course the woolsack was all before him ; but there are such a deuce of a lot of these things always before us, and which remain so, and in lengthening perspective, till the little volume of our lives is closed. It is only in pantomime that you ever can calculate with certainty upon coming to "the halls of dazzling light" at the conclusion of the performance. Many of us in life are bonneted by the clown, upset by the pantaloon, or disappear down unexpected traps from which there is no redemption. We cast away the bright aspirations of our youth, and are quite contented if we can but get our bread-and-cheese honestly, and meekly deprecate all those schemes for firing the Thames which we were once so hot upon.

Grenville Rose, meanwhile, is continuing his struggle with the difficulties incidental to those who pursue "the early worm." He has meditated, as

many of us have also done, on—why does a servant never seem to think it necessary to light your dressing candles when preparing for these before-sunrise excursions? He has endeavoured to part his back-hair, with a candlestick in one hand and a hair-brush in the other, and just escaped the usual near misapplication of those articles. He has tumbled over his boots, and into his open portmanteau. Early risers should not dress. Get up, put on your clothes, and vow to become a Christian at the first favourable opportunity, but tamper not with the solemnities of the toilette. I hold myself it should be part of a valet's duty on these dire occasions to put one bodily into the frigid hip or more icy-looking sponge-bath, if the usual dressing routine is to be pursued; otherwise the flesh is weak, and my first theory will be found infinitely to be most relied on.

However, Grenville at last enters the old dining-room, to gulp his scalding coffee, and recognise the utter futility of attempting to eat at abnormal hours. He is suffering altogether from considerable mental depression—predominant idea, perhaps, “What a farce all County balls are!” Suddenly the door opens, and Maude Denison glides into the room.

“Good-morning, Grenville. Isn't this good of me to make such a struggle, and rush down to give you your coffee? Ah, I see you've got it. Never

mind, *amico mio*, you must take the will for the deed. At all events, I'm in time to say good-bye."

His face lit up as he shook hands with her. "Very kind indeed, Maude, to come down and give me a last glimpse of you,—so tired, too, as you must be after your triumphs of last night."

"Triumphs! What do you mean?" replied Miss Denison, in sweet humility, though a coquetish smile and flash of the deep grey eyes showed that she was perfectly conscious of her ball-room success.

"Oh, the hypocrisy of women!" laughed her cousin. "As if you did not know perfectly well that all the men were raving with admiration, and that the ladies could find no words to express their opinion of you! As if you could not imagine that you were pronounced handsome, lovely, graceful,—stigmatised as over-dressed, under-dressed, and awkward! While your admirers on one side of the room vowed so light a foot never glided across the boards at Xminster, your detractors on the other, were speculating as to how much of your hair and complexion were really your birthright. I heard one hideous old woman confide to the mother of three red-haired daughters that you squinted in the bosom of your family, although it was not enough to be perceptible in public. Pooh, Maude! As if you did not know you were the belle of the

ball, and enjoyed all the rights and privileges of the distinction."

"Ah, well!" she rejoined, with a saucy smile; "I am not going to be a humbug to you, Grenville. I know some people thought I looked nice, and I know others disliked me for doing so. Why should they? A woman would fain look her best always, only, poor things, we can't. We catch cold at times, and then our noses will get red. So let me pour you out some more coffee."

"Thanks; but you have not told me yet whether you enjoyed your ball."

"Yes, that I did: I got lots of dancing, and I do like that you know. How good poor Mrs. Learmont was about it! It must be hard to sit on the back benches, and look on all night; though so many people came to talk to her, that I don't think she much minded it. But how about yourself, Gren? I don't think you quite did your duty."

"Pretty fairly, I fancy. We can't be expected to consummate the amount of pirouetting that your sex delight in. I danced a good deal, and it was real pleasure to me to see the little sensation you made. I like to see my pretty cousin appreciated as she should be, and taking her legitimate position in the county."

"And what's that, pray?"

“Why, as the belle of all Hampshire, of course.”

“Oh Gren, Gren! to think of your turning flatterer! Was it not worth while getting up to see you off, to have such pretty speeches made to one? You have said nothing so nice since, years ago, you complimented me on trying to jump the brook in Eversley pastures, when I got in, you know, and I should have cried, only you said I was so plucky.”

“Yes, I recollect. I wish, though, you hadn’t danced with that fellow Pearman last night. I’ve a sort of presentiment ill will come of it.”

“You stupid Grenville; what can come of it? I am not likely to see him again for months—not till next Xminster ball—perhaps never. At the worst, recognition of his existence on meeting is all that quadrille entails.”

“Well, I suppose you are right, Maude; but it is time I was off. Good-bye.” And Grenville’s pulse tingled a little, as his lips touched the fair cheek so quietly yielded to him. “Kind regards to my uncle and aunt; and drop me a line now and then.”

“Don’t be afraid of that,” laughed Miss Denison; “don’t I always write to you when I want anything?—and am I not always wanting something? I think the past might testify in my favour. Good-bye; don’t be long before you come and see us again.”

Grenville Rose pondered moodily over his visit, as he drove to the station. He had not quite mastered the fact that he was in love with his cousin, but he had arrived at some close apprehensions on the subject. He felt that he would have been a good deal better satisfied had his parting salute been much less easily accorded. The sisterly way in which Maude Denison had bid him "God speed" could have been misunderstood by no one out of his boyhood. He had the satisfaction of thinking that, at all events, she cared for nobody else; but there was also the chilling conviction that she regarded him more, if anything, in the light of a brother than a cousin. He didn't himself quite know what he meant, or what he wanted. He had a confused idea that everything was going wrong, as far as he was concerned. This erratic fusion of ideas is common enough in early life. Boys fall in love, and rave about it: a few years later we are very shy and diffident on the subject—we are even loth to admit it to ourselves. This is the time at which women marry us, instead of our marrying them. It may be denominated as the "helpless epoch," and varies quite half-a-score of years in different individuals. "Nonsense!" you will say. I can only reassert that in the lives of the majority of men there will be a time, before five-and-thirty, when it will be at the

command of some woman to wed them or leave them: and when you meet those pleasant old bachelors, depend upon it, the Eve who had the chance did not consider the apple worth the picking.

The pale February sun is shining down the grassy vistas, and a few sanguine rabbits scamper about in a jocund way, as if there were no such thing as an English spring in perspective: rabbits that probably first saw the light in the preceding year, and are therefore in happy ignorance of what March can be capable of. Maude, fresh as a rose, after a turn round the garden, comes in just in time to greet her mother on her return to the dining-room. Petting her mother is one of the chief pleasures of Maude Denison's life. On this occasion she conducts her into the easy chair next the fire, makes the tea, and then, drawing a stool near, seats herself at Mrs. Denison's feet, and with girlish delight recounts all her successes of the previous night; to which the fond mother listens with quiet happiness, as her hand plays with her daughter's silken tresses. That nobody could eclipse, that nobody could ever be worthy of mating with her peerless Maude, was a thing that Mrs. Denison would have deemed absurd to argue.

"And, mother, dear," said the girl, at last, "Grenville said, before he went away this morning—for I

saw him off, you know,—he said I was quite the belle of the ball. What do you think of your daughter now? Won't that satisfy papa, although he did grumble so about the expense of the dress?"

"Yes, love. He will be quite contented when he hears how thoroughly you enjoyed yourself. I am only so sorry that I was not strong enough to have been present myself at my darling's success."

"Yes," said the girl, thoughtfully, "it wanted that. I did want you to come back to, and talk to, between the dances. It was not near so well worth while being admired, with you not there to see. Oh, mother!" said Maude, laughing, "I do believe you would have felt more conceited about it than I did."

"I have not the slightest doubt about it, my dear. When we have nothing left to be vain of ourselves, we are apt to get very proud of our daughters."

"I won't have you talk like that, mother, as if you were ever-so old, when you know you're not," retorted Maude.

"Well, dear, if not quite an old woman, I have got to that age when I am quite content to look at the successes of my child as a soft reflection of my own early victories. But, here comes your father."

Harold Denison entered the room in his usual

listless fashion. It had not been always so. There had been plenty of energy in him in his younger days, but the springs of his life were broken now. No one knew better than he did that it was so, and that it was the consequence of his own folly and rashness. He kissed his daughter carelessly, asked if she had enjoyed her ball, scarce listened to her affirmation, and then plunged at once into the letters and papers that lay piled alongside his plate. He was a tall, slight, handsome man, with a keen, cold eye and rather undecided mouth, verging on fifty years of age. The slightly grizzled eyebrows knit as he skimmed his correspondence. It was a sign his wife was only too well accustomed to, for the post brought little matter for exultation to Harold Denison. Duns, lawyers' letters anent mortgages and sundry other liabilities, formed the staple of the daily missives that constituted the accompaniment to his breakfast. Can it be wondered that the man's temper was soured?—that the whilom gay frolic squire of Glinn had become a cold, caustic, and selfish man of the world?

“Things seem to be getting worse and worse, Eleanor,” he observed, throwing down an epistle on the best superfine blue post, and sipping his tea moodily. “The old cry from Reynolds and Gibson—that that accursed interest on the mortgage will

be due next month, and begging prompt settlement this time, as the fellow is getting rather uneasy about the stability of the security, on account of the delay of last half-year. It will be the devil and all to scrape the money together. Sheep, too, are down to nothing almost—so Thompson tells me—or else I have a hundred to sell that I looked to to help me through with this.”

Mrs. Denison sighed. She had gone through a good many such breakfasts in her time, and felt as helpless as ever in suggesting expedients for the occasion.

“It’s very unfortunate,” she said at length. “Mr. Pearman is not pressing, at all events, I hope.”

“No, curse him; he has the grace to remember that two-thirds of the property have already fallen into his hands. He is always tolerably lenient about his money. The fellow knows, moreover, that his is the first mortgage on the estate; and, I daresay, at times looks forward to being the eventual owner of Glinn. Shouldn’t wonder if he was, too, some of these days,” muttered Denison bitterly. “I used to grieve once, Nell, that we hadn’t a son; I begin to think now it was all for the best. I should feel it more if I had to think that my boy would never be master here. Yet that is pretty well how the case would stand if we had one.”

"Providence knows what is best for us, Harold," returned his wife softly; "it was a sore source of trouble to us once; but, as you say, it spares us some bitter thoughts now."

She associated herself with him in his career of extravagance as if she had been equally to blame, though, as far as her gentle nature dared, she had entered more than one meek remonstrance at his reckless career. But Mrs. Denison was not the woman to throw her husband's faults continually in his teeth. It was all done now, past recall; still, as far as it lay within her power, the wife was willing to bear her share of the burden Harold Denison's folly had entailed on his family.

"And pray, Maude, did Mr. Pearman honour Xminister with his presence last night?" inquired her father, sarcastically.

"Young Mr. Pearman was there, but not the old man. He seemed to know a good many people there. Mr. Brisden ——"

"Yes, it's the old story. The old county families are swept away by these spinners, brewers, solicitors, and such-like. Another hundred years, and there won't be one of the old names left in the neighbourhood."

Mr. Denison a little forgot that if the brewers, spinners, &c., did buy and succeed to the old estates,

it was on account, generally, of the folly and extravagance of the said fine old county families. You can't buy what is not in the market; and had Mr. Denison in his early career simply spent the eight thousand a year he was born to, instead of the twenty thousand a year he was not, Glinn might not have looked now as if liable to become the property of the highest bidder. One looks sadly on as one of those old hereditary estates changes hands; but, alas! it must always be so. Descent from the Conqueror is no safeguard against a man being an incurable fool, and, in the vernacular of the day, "going an inextricable mucker."

But breakfast is over. Maude flits away to her own little sanctum, with its piano, books, and budding camellias; Mrs. Denison goes off for a conference with the old housekeeper; while the squire betakes himself to his study, to struggle with figures and hold gloomy converse with Thompson, his farm bailiff. The mother and daughter do not feel much mental perturbation about the difficulties that threaten them. For the last five years have they not heard Mr. Denison discourse in the same melancholy strain? Constant jeremiads lose their effect; they thought little of the growling of the storm. But Harold Denison, as he sat puzzling his head in his room over that complication of figures, knew

that things had pretty well reached their climax, and that it would be hard to predicate even how many months he should still remain Denison of Glinn.





CHAPTER III.

A PROJECTED ALLIANCE.

IN the very modern but extremely comfortable dining-room of Mannersley, the Pearmans, father and son, are sitting over their wine. The old man has turned seventy, and can hardly be said to look as if his money-grubbing career had agreed with him. He is shrunk and worn, with a stoop in his shoulders, and his hand shakes a little as he lifts his glass to his lips. Altogether, he wears the aspect of a man whose constitution is beginning to break up. The insurance offices, I fancy, would reject him now, upon almost any terms. Wealth is not amassed without much wear-and-tear of mind and constitution, and your great turf speculators seldom attain a patriarchal age. He draws his chair closer to the blazing grate, and

holds out his glass for his son to fill, with a slight shiver.

"I think I've got a bit of a cold, Sam," he remarked, as he replaced the wine by his side. "Better me than Coriander, though, isn't it?"

"Well, father, I am sorry for you; but I don't suppose it will be much harm in your case, while it would be the devil and all in his."

"How did he go this morning?"

"Well, I wasn't there; but Stephen tells me he did a good steady gallop. If he keeps right, he'll about win the 'Two Thousand.'"

"Yes," chuckled the old man. "I've been racing now getting on fifty years, and I don't think I ever saw my way into a much better thing than this looks like. We've got on, too, at a very pretty price, take it all round. It will be a hottish Monday for some of them, that after the 'Guineas' are run."

"I hope so; but there's one or two things I want to talk to you about. There's young Sheffington; he's a crackbrained young fool, and I've got him down in my book to the tune of a loser of twelve hundred if Coriander wins. Now, you have done business with him—is he good for that amount?"

"Yes, Sam—yes. We'll get that from him in

time ; but I doubt there'll be a bit of waiting for it. Don't take long odds from him again. What else ? ”

“ Well, Flashington stands to lose a thousand to us. He doesn't bear the character of a very good pay, though he always contrives to escape the penalties of not booking-up altogether.”

Old Pearman smiled, and seemed to sip his port with additional relish. “ Oh,” he said, “ and he's peppered Coriander, has he ? He's the biggest thief in England ; but he'll pay *me*, though he don't everybody.”

“ And why you, in particular ? ” inquired his son.

“ Because he made a mistake about his name in early life, Sam ; and he is quite aware that I know it, and could rake up evidence enough against him, if he irritated me, to make things, to say the least of it, very unpleasant, as far as he is concerned.”

“ Good ! Then, with a little pressure, that'll be good money, if it's won, eh ? ”

“ Just so,” nodded the father.

“ Now, we'll come to something else. Just listen to this, with all your brains. I've pretty well come to the conclusion that I had better get married.”

“ I don't see any reason you should not ; on the contrary, I should like to see it. Not going to make

a fool of yourself, I suppose?"—and the old man looked keenly at his son.

"Tell you more about it when it comes off; but certainly not, I think, in the design. We've made a good bit of money between us. I'm not going to say it isn't most of it yours; still, since I have been having a share in the concern, I've put some together myself. Now, what I want in marriage is connection, more than money. These thick-skulled county bigwigs won't recognise us, who have made our own way in the world, and built up our own fortunes, because, forsooth, they have kept their registers more carefully, and are able to give more accurate descriptions of their grandfathers and grandmothers than we can. In short, their names are in 'The Stud Book,' and ours are not."

Sam Pearman said all this as if he and his father were two honest traders who had acquired a fortune by skill and industry—and paused for a reply.

"Yes,—yes, I think you are right; but there will be difficulties—difficulties, I fear."

"Of course there will, to a certain extent; there always is about getting anything worth having in this world; but money is a key to most things nowadays. An acknowledged axiom of the age is, that rank marries money; and, *vice versa* £ s. d.

goes for position. Tottering coronets must be propped by wealthy alliances. The parson or doctor marries the rich tallow-chandler's widow. Marriage is a social contract in these times. A hundred thousand pounds from Manchester stands out for strawberry-leaves in the Coronet, while a fifth of the money from Birmingham is quite content to put up with an Honorable."

"'Gad, you're right, Sam. I've seen something of these things; and pretty squabbling there is over the settlements, generally. The monied side never think they can be tied tight enough, while the other are usually so sensitive about the absence of trust that is to be reposed in them. It does one good to look at, Sam—it does, indeed. To think they can be so fond of each other, and such men and women of business at the same time! I've seen 'em vow to love, cherish, and all the rest of it, when a week before a dispute about how a mere couple of thousand in the settlements should be disposed of had all but upset the match!" And the old gentleman chuckled so after his little joke, that he was in considerable danger of choking.

"What an old image it is!" muttered his dutiful son, rather disgusted at the untimely interruption occasioned by his parent's jocularities. However, as his sire recovered, he merely observed,

"Better have another glass of port after that, father ; it will do you good."

"You're right, Sam—right ; we get thin in the blood as we grow old, and want stimulants to make it circulate. This irritation in the throat, though, rather grows upon me. I can't stand any exposure nowadays, though in my time I have thought little of the bleakest wind that ever blew across Newmarket Heath."

"Well," resumed his son, "to return to what I was saying, you agree with me that I must look out more for connection than money, don't you?"

"Yes, I think that's best ; but it would do no harm if you could see your way into a trifle of property besides ;" and the old man looked keenly across at the seed he had begotten.

"Exactly. Now I am coming to the marrow of my project. I was at the Xminster ball last night, and the prettiest girl in the room was the daughter of old Denison of Glinn. I got introduced to her ; danced with her ; and did quite as well as anyone could expect to do in a first dance,—just made her acquaintance, in fact. Now that's the lady I've marked down as my intended."

"Yes," said the old man musingly, "that might do if we could bring it about ; but he's a proud man, the father—very."

"We'll come to that presently. Just listen while I reckon up all the advantages. First of all, I have taken a fancy to the girl. She's a real beauty, every inch of her. In the next place, she's an only child, isn't she?"

Old Pearman nodded assent.

"Consequently, it's only fair to suppose that Glinn and what's left with it will eventually fall to her. We have got most of the old property now; and that would ensure the whole thing being in our hands at last."

"Yours, Sam, yours. It is not likely I'd last to see it. Harold Denison is full twenty years younger than I am, and his wife is younger again; they'll see me out, boy."

"Well, father, it's no use denying it may be so. Still, in days to come, I should be Pearman of Glinn; and, with a wife of their own class, it would be hard if I didn't take my place in the county."

"Yes, you should manage it, though I have failed; but you've had advantages I hadn't, Sam. You've a pull, you see, in education; I hadn't much. The art of making money I taught myself, and it didn't leave time for learning a deal of anything else. You start with a tidy lot made; and I think I have shown you enough to ensure your not making ducks and drakes of it." And the old gentleman

indulged in an unctuous chuckle and another glass of port.

"No, I don't think I shall hurt. I can take care of myself pretty well at most games on the board. I never dabble in anything I don't understand, and look to have twenty shillings'-worth for a sovereign on all occasions. Don't you make yourself uneasy about me, governor."

This idea seemed to tickle Mr. Pearman senior to such an extent that he was once more on the eve of choking—a catastrophe, indeed, that was not evaded without considerable coughing and some involuntary tears.

"It's my throat, Sam," he gasped at last; "I feel a good deal of irritation about there at times."

"Now," continued his son, without noticing the interruption, "we'll reckon up the trumps in our hand; they're not very many. First, Denison is a poor man, is he not?"

"Yes: he has well on to three thousand a year nominal rental left still; but there's more than one mortgage on the property, let alone other charges. I doubt his having fifteen hundred a year clear; that's little enough to keep up Glinn on—let alone being pretty well in debt besides."

"Haven't you some money on the property yourself?"

“Ten thousand, Sam, and I’m first mortgagee; but I know there’s a second mortgage of the same amount, and there may be more for all I know.”

“Well, these, you see, are all points in my favour. We could make this first mortgage quite easy for him, at all events.”

“It’s a deal of money—ten thousand pounds; but of course it would be different if the whole property looked like coming to you at last.”

“Well, then, we must take that second mortgage also into our own hands, and let it stand at very easy interest. It will be only virtually allowing Denison so much a year during his lifetime, and in the long run will fall principally upon me.”

“Yes; but I don’t follow the meaning of all this, Sam.”

“That’s just what I am about to explain to you. My chances of meeting Miss Denison are so extremely few, that it is quite impossible I can arrive at asking for her hand in that way. My only chance is your proposing it to her father, and asking him to accord me permission to try if I can win his daughter’s hand. Mind, that is the way you must put it; but don’t forget that you will have to bring your pecuniary hold over him into play also—only, do it gently.”

“You may trust me; I have pulled the strings

in so many ways in my time, that I've learnt to be pretty cute about doing it with a delicate touch. Jerking 'em's a mistake only allowable in the beginning of life. I think this'll do; but let me think it over a bit, Sam. I'll help you all I can when I've made my mind quite up about it."

"All right!" and Pearman left the room in quest of a cigar. With regard to his venerable sire's last remark, he thought little about it. He knew perfectly that it only meant the old gentleman was craving for his after-dinner nap, and considered he had talked business enough for the present.

It is a curious anomaly in our social framework, how loth we all are to admit the fact of going to sleep at abnormal periods. Friends or acquaintances, relatives, and even strangers, whom you have caught most palpably in the arms of Somnus, indignantly repudiate the insinuation. I have known one of the latter even take the trouble to explain in a railway carriage that he felt the motion less with his eyes shut. An old friend of mine, with a great natural taste for studying the eccentricities of character, went down by rail one golden spring day, to view the horse-chesnuts at Bushey Park, then, of course, in all their glory. In the carriage with him was a stout man, apparently a well-to-do London tradesman. Ere the end of their journey they dis-

covered they were bound much upon the same errand.

"Yes, I often come down here," quoth the stout gentleman, "to get away from the great hive, and enjoy a few quiet hours of *intellectual thought*."

On arrival, they separated ; but in the course of his wanderings through the park that afternoon, my friend came upon his fellow-traveller lying flat upon his back under one of the grand old horse-chesnuts. An empty bottle of bitter beer lay on the grass on one side of him, and a half-smoked clay pipe (a veritable churchwarden) on the other, while the deep bass music that he discoursed from his nose told how he renovated his intellects for further struggles with this wicked world.

Perhaps he was right. Stopping the machine, in many cases, is not time thrown away ; but why couldn't the man say honestly that he came down there to do nothing ? Some of our greatest intellects would have benefited had they but recognised the advantage of now and then letting the mind lie fallow, instead of wearing out the soil by incessant cropping.

We will take advantage of the elder Pearman's repose to analyse what his ideas had been previously on such a subject as his son's proposition. Like many men who accumulate large fortunes,

the old man's ambition had long been to found a family. More than once had he ventured hints on the propriety of Sam's marrying and settling down; but he knew that his son was far from tractable on many points, and this had been one he had always utterly declined to entertain. Moreover, he had never been able to do more than generalise on the subject, and to indicate anyone that he looked upon as a desirable daughter-in-law had always proved beyond him.

The next day Pearman became excessively enamoured of his hopeful son's project, though he did not at all disguise to himself the difficulties that stood in the way of its accomplishment. If he had not had the advantage of such an education as Sam had had, yet he had made a large fortune by trading on the weaknesses of his fellow-men. Those who achieve this, though it may be little to their credit, become more thoroughly acquainted with the springs of the human mind than all the metaphysicians and philosophers who have ever written or dreamed about it. The son might be an astute man enough at his vocation of the turf, but he was a child, compared to his father, when computing to what extent he could persuade, bind, or break men to his own will. The son thought the advantages of such an alliance must be so transparent in a worldly point of

view to Harold Denison that he would be a willing coadjutor in the scheme, from the moment it was proposed to him ; the father at once foresaw the old family pride that would be up in arms against him the instant he mooted the idea.

But he said to himself, "I have had much to do with Harold Denison, and should know him thoroughly. He is selfish at heart to the core. In all those troublous days of his, when I was settling his affairs, I never knew him dwell upon what the results might be to his wife and daughter. It was ever what he had to give up. He'll scout this proposal with indignation when I first mention it to him ; but he'll come round to it in time. As for the girl, that's Sam's affair ; but when Denison has once made up his mind to her marrying him, he's as likely a man as I know to turn on the domestic screw heavily. I've seen that oracle worked more than once, and it's generally pretty efficacious. They run away with somebody else afterwards, occasionally, but that's the fault of the husbands' not keeping them within bounds. Yes ; I'll ride over, and see Denison to-morrow. It won't be a very pleasant job, I doubt ; but I am used to that."

The owner of Glinn felt that slight nervous perturbation that invariably attends the call of a large creditor. The noise of the carriage-wheels

had merely produced a feeling of languid curiosity; but the announcement that Mr. Pearman wanted to see him, made the squire's pulse quicken, and it was with an anxiety he was unable to disguise that he welcomed him in his own peculiar slow tones.

"Sit down, Pearman. Take that arm-chair, and make yourself comfortable. I hope to Heaven you haven't come to make me the reverse?"

"Not at all, Mr. Denison. My visit is not a business one, though I have something I should like just to talk to you a little about presently. Shocking weather we're having. Bad for the farmers—very, isn't it?"

"'Gad, you may say that. Nothing we have to sell seems to be worth anything. All farm produce is a drug in the market. How's Coriander going on? It looks like your gathering a terrible harvest in April at Newmarket, anyhow. The horse is doing well, I suppose?"

"Yes, I believe so. You know, Mr. Denison, I'm getting too old myself to see after such things. I leave all that to Sam; but he tells me the horse will run well for the 'Guineas,' bar accidents."

"'Run well!' 'Bar accidents!' Why, 'bar accidents,' he must win," cried the ever sanguine Denison. "I never bet now, as you know; but in the old days I should have had a thousand on him."

"Ah, well," said the old lawyer, "there's where it is. You always would believe in certainties in racing. I never myself got further than believing a horse would run well."

"Yes," laughed the squire; "and in consequence you made a fortune while I lost one. I'm afraid, too, it would be the same thing all over again if I could begin once more."

Pearman shot a keen look at him from under his grizzled brows, and thought most assuredly that it would be so, and how very much it would facilitate his present design if the squire was a little involved in that way at present. He of course knew the main part of Harold Denison's entanglements, but even he, though his principal man of business, did not know how bad things really were. It would have given him more confidence to unfold the object of his embassy had he been possessed of such knowledge.

"Well, Pearman," continued the squire, "I am afraid I have no money left to put upon Coriander. Those old days are gone. Yes," said Denison, bitterly; "half-pence are of more account to me now than sovereigns were then. But what is it you want to talk to me about? Nothing to my advantage, I'll be bound."

"I'm afraid not; not but that it might be. But

I've never been able, Mr. Denison, to induce you to listen to anything to your own advantage."

"'Gad, sir, I can call to mind very few of your propositions that tended that way. A few hundreds to be saved here and there, at the cost of total abandonment of my social position—cases in which the saving was incommensurate with the sacrifice."

"You judge me hardly, Mr. Denison. On the occasions to which you allude, pardon me if I say that it was an over-strained delicacy on your part which prevented matters being brought to a more satisfactory conclusion. It is the way with you all," muttered the old lawyer, musingly. "You forget these scruples when they might be of use to you, and hamper us, who have to put your affairs straight, with them afterwards."

"A Denison of Glinn, sir, is not to be included in the same category as a bankrupt trader, I presume," remarked the squire, haughtily.

"No; but it would be better both for him and his creditors if it could be so. You repudiate the idea of all compromise, and say, 'In time, everybody shall be paid in full.' The result is, you never get clear, and the creditors are never satisfied."

"But they will be in time," returned Harold Denison; and the uncertain tones in which he

uttered the words were a stringent commentary on his previous speech.

"It's just about that," said Pearman, "that I'm wishing to talk to you now. It's a cruel pity that a fine old property like Glinn should be broken up. A good deal of it, you see, has fallen into my hands."

"You need not remind me of that," interrupted Harold Denison; "I am quite aware of the price I am paying for the follies of my younger days."

"It is not likely I should recall such disagreeable facts to your memory, if I had not something to propose with regard to their being to a considerable extent wiped out. You will do me the justice, I think, Mr. Denison, to admit that since I have had the honour of being your pecuniary adviser, I have never held bitters to your lips, when I deemed anything more palatable would meet the exigencies of the case?"

The squire nodded assent. He certainly had a confused idea that Pearman had made a pretty good thing out of the adjustment of his affairs, but it had always been by the *suaviter in modo* process.

"Now," continued the attorney, "I see a way in which you may be relieved from all immediate embarrassment connected with money matters, and by

which Miss Denison may be the eventual mistress of Glinn in its original integrity."

Denison started. To be released from the harassing strain that lies on him now with regard to pounds, shillings and pence—that the old property should once more cumulate in his daughter—opened a gorgeous prospect to his eyes. It was a piece of good fortune that he had never dreamed of. But he knew his man by this time well. What was the price he was to pay for this? He said nothing, but inwardly his brain was busy in vain conjecture as to what Pearman would demand as his guerdon for producing such a transformation scene. The idea of that worthy solicitor ever doing anything without an ulterior motive was one he never entertained for an instant. What would he want? What did he mean?

A silence of some five minutes ensued between the two men; the old lawyer was anxious that the tempting bait he held out should be thoroughly gorged before he was called upon to state upon what terms all this might be brought about. His best experience of men told him that there was no such mistake in life as hurrying the *andanté*—an axiom most of us learn, though generally too late but to derive minor advantages therefrom.

"This sounds too good to be true, Pearman," at

length remarked the squire. "If it can be done, you must have some infernal rider to the proposition, that it is hardly possible I should assent to."

"It is not likely that this can be brought about without some valuable assistance from yourself," rejoined the solicitor. "But will you bear stedfastly in your mind the great advantages that will accrue immediately to yourself, and ultimately to Miss Denison? Will you, moreover, be good enough to hear me patiently to the end?"

The squire nodded an impatient assent.

"You must, of course, be quite aware that now Miss Denison has arrived at a marriageable age, her great personal attractions have claimed the attention of a good many young men in the county."

The attorney paused, but his auditor looked grimly at the fire, and expressed his feelings by neither word nor gesture.

"Well, a young gentleman of considerable property, and still better expectations, who has had the privilege of meeting Miss Denison, is so struck with her charms and accomplishments that he has commissioned me to ask your permission to try whether he cannot succeed in inducing her to accept him as a husband. On the point of family he is quite aware that he has no pretensions to Miss Denison's

hand; but as regards income, I think there would be nothing to be desired."

"Who the devil do you mean?" broke in the squire. "Has Maude given him any encouragement, that you come with this story to me?"

"My dear sir, his acquaintance with Miss Denison is far too slight for anything of that kind ever to have been even thought of on his part. He is merely anxious to have your permission to try his luck. Without that, believe me, he would never dare to aspire to your daughter's hand."

All this show of deference induced the squire to listen to the proposition, at all events, quietly. Who on earth Pearman could have in his eye he had no idea. That he could mean his son all this time never entered Harold Denison's head. He certainly knew he had a son, but, mixing so little as he did in the county now, he had barely seen him, nor had he, but at odd times, even heard of him.

"But who is it, man? Let's know the name of this bashful suitor? 'Gad! it's a quality one sees little enough of in these days."

"My son, Mr. Denison, is the gentleman who solicits your permission to do his best to win your daughter."

"Your son! Why, d—n it all!"—and here the

squire stopped, perfectly thunderstruck. It was a levelling age, he knew ; that the tide of democracy was at the flood, he was aware ; that our cherished institutions were looked on with disdain, that there were people who saw no virtue in coronets, and thought an Established Church a worn-out institution that it would be as well to do away with, he had heard ; but that the son of a confounded money-lending attorney should presume to dream of mating with a Denison of Glinn was a *bouleversement* of his world that he had never contemplated. For a few minutes he was literally speechless ; then all the pride of race surged up. He came of a line of whom it had been often said that their tongues were as sharp and ready as their swords.

“Excuse me,” he remarked ; “I was not aware that the times were so far advanced that our daughters were regarded as saleable commodities out of their own class of life. I was not aware that the social gap between myself and my solicitor was so effectually bridged over. Your son, sir, will have to take his chance with the young man from the butcher’s, and Mr. Muffatee, who keeps the draper’s establishment in Xminster. I shall not presume to influence Miss Denison in her choice.”

Old Pearman had many times in the course of his career moralised upon the weakness of losing

one's temper about anything, but the squire's sneer brought the blood to his pale temples.

"You take a high hand, sir—a high hand. I asked you to listen to me patiently, and you insult me. I spoke to you humbly enough to start with; but I tell you now that wealth chooses its mate from blood in these days, and that many as wellborn as Miss Denison have married not a bit better lineage than mine."

"Perhaps so. People forget themselves in all classes, and forfeit their social status; but, by Heaven! it's getting time for money-grubbers to learn one thing, and that is—that possession of all the gold in California does not constitute a gentleman, or entitle a man to claim alliance with gentle blood!"

The old solicitor's lips quivered, and his lean fingers played nervously with his watch-chain, as he replied—

"I did not come here to argue our mutual social position. I came here to afford an embarrassed man, for whom I have a sincere regard, in spite of all the hard names he heaps upon me, an opportunity of freeing himself from those entanglements. I advanced a proposition which gave him a chance of in some way repairing the evil that the early follies of his youth had entailed on his child, destined to

pay her full share of such indiscretions. The days of such prejudices are past, I tell you, Mr. Denison ; and once more I ask you not to give me an answer now, but to reflect upon the proposal I have made to you."

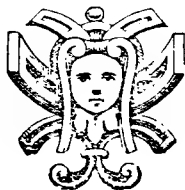
"You do us too much honour, Mr. Pearman. Permit me to observe that I must decline all further consideration of the subject. I am perfectly convinced the alliance you propose with such a delicious oblivion of all status of society would be extremely unsuitable. Allow me to make Miss Denison's acknowledgments for the distinction you would have conferred upon her, and to ring for your carriage."

"Very good, sir—very good," cried the old attorney, as he rose in his wrath ; "the time will come, maybe, when you'll think that old Sam Pearman would have been a good man to have had at your back. I say nothing, Mr. Denison ; but you'll find that you have not made many greater mistakes in your career than this morning's work." And, muttering to himself, the irate old gentleman left the room.

"By G—d !" murmured Harold Denison, "I wonder what the world is coming to ! The idea of a child of mine marrying the son of a money-lending solicitor ! Curse his impudence !"

Then his thoughts reverted to that ten thousand

pound mortgage, and the angry words of the old man at parting, and he reflected, moodily, that there was little likelihood of much time being granted anent the payment of the interest in future ; indeed, it was more than probable that Pearman, in his anger, would call in his money. All which considerations harassed Harold Denison's mind not a little, and he thought, if it had to be done again, he would reject the old lawyer's proposal with rather more courtesy.





CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST TURN OF THE SCREW.

THE solicitor drove away, fuming with indignation. "Pompous, poverty-stricken fool!" were the epithets he applied to the squire, in these first moments of his wrath. Even a usurious solicitor is possessed of pride of some kind, and though he may hold it in tolerable subjection during the early stages of his career, like other men's, it waxes fat and thrives wonderfully under the accumulation of wealth. Harold Denison had trampled it remorselessly under foot. Then the irritation subsided, and the astute old head once more began to reckon up the chances of the game. He played it all over again in his own mind. "No," he muttered; "don't think I made any mistakes! I was a fool to lose my temper, though. Hadn't I made up my mind,

all along, that he'd take it pretty much in that way, to start with? Lord!" chuckled the old man, "when I think how many of 'em I've seen run rusty about their family names, places, and plate! It was foolish—ay, very foolish—to be annoyed at Denison's tantrums. Names?—bah!" continued the old man, contemptuously. "If it came all the way from the Conqueror, its worth on stamped paper is the only valid test."

"Yes," he continued, still turning the subject over in his mind, "he's on his stilts just now, and has not had time to grasp the solid advantages that will accrue to him. He's been a mad spendthrift, has Harold Denison; but he was a man who, in those days, even, thought more of his own personal comforts and convenience than he ever did of his wife's. Selling Mannersley hurt his pride; but I don't think he ever gave a thought as to how he was curtailing his daughter's inheritance. It'll work! only give it time. I've often said pike-fishing is the only sport worth studying. It's the game of life in miniature. You have to use the gudgeons to tempt the big fish. I have kept little men afloat in their difficulties, to induce those who really had property to come to me. 'Give them plenty of time to gorge,' too, is another good maxim: and never put too much strain on the line. Yes!" chuckled

the cynical old attorney, once more. "Men are a good deal like pike in their rapacity and foolishness. Something tells me that Harold Denison will swallow the bait. Only wait patiently, and things generally come round. Those that can't afford, or haven't patience to wait, are bound to suffer."

Sam Pearman, when he heard the result of his father's mission, took rather a different view of it from his progenitor. As a younger man he lacked patience; and then, moreover, was there not the blow to his self-esteem? Between twenty and thirty we feel that acutely; from thirty to forty, with a sort of modified soreness; at fifty the conceit has been taken out of most of us, and we are no longer astonished at finding that the world rates us a little lower than our own valuation. Electroplate may pass for gold for a short season, in these days, but society is pretty certain to detect the ring of false metal ere very long.

Samuel the junior had so far been a fortunate man in pursuit of his ambitions. Though not so successful as he could have wished, yet, to a certain extent, he had worked his way into the county society. There were many houses that he was occasionally asked to, as an odd bachelor, to make up. But here he thought to establish his position by a *coup de main*. Despite all his father had said at the time, a man

with Sam Pearman's eye to the main chance could not conceive a man in Harold Denison's position rejecting a proposal so very much to his own advantage. He might recognise a certain amount of difficulty on the part of the lady, but men of his age are not wont to be diffident about their own powers of attraction on these occasions, and Sam Pearman was one of the last to entertain apprehensions on that score.

"He don't know what's good for him, and that's about the size of it!" was that gentleman's remark, as his sire retailed the account of his interview with Denison. "We shall have to exercise a little gentle pressure. I'm not going to be choked off my game, at all events at this stage of the proceedings. Invalids often require coercion to make them take the tonics necessary for their existence, and it will be for you to make Denison understand that he will cease to be Denison of Glinn, at all events, unless he is prepared to welcome me as a son-in-law."

"Leave it to me, Sam, and don't be in a hurry. I made up my mind about it the other night. I don't say all, my boy, but a good many things I have made up my mind to have come to pass in course of time. Leave me alone to work the oracle just now, and, depend upon it, I'll give you due notice when it's time for you to make a move."

The son acquiesced. If at times he thought his father was getting a little slow at turf tactics—a pursuit from which he had in great measure withdrawn—he still held a firm belief that his parent was difficult to beat in the great game of life, more especially when he held a winning card or two in his hand.

Some two or three weeks elapsed; and then, one spring morning, Harold Denison received a letter, bitter as the blooming of the blackthorn,* to the effect that Mr. Pearman, of Mannersley, felt it incumbent on himself to call in his money lent on mortgage, a more favourable opportunity for investment, &c., having offered.

That this would probably be the result of their last interview, the squire had foreseen. Yet, as days went by without any such notice, he began fondly to hope that the attorney had seen the presumption he had been guilty of, and that things would still jog quietly along in their old way. How ephemeral that way had now become, under almost any circumstances, he still kept locked within his own breast. But as he read that letter the squire knew well that the rubicon was passed, that his ships were burnt, and himself defeated. He knew, too well, that to raise that ten thousand anywhere else

* Usually attended with severe weather in the eastern counties.

would result in an exposure of his affairs tantamount to ruin. He was quite aware that Pearman was equally conversant with the fact. He prepared himself for the impending crash.

But there is a certain amount of notice requisite on the calling in of a mortgage, and this gave Harold Denison time to reflect—whether for good or evil the readers of this story must determine. Had the blow fallen at once, he would have abandoned Glinn, grimly, and set up his lonely tent in some remote watering-place. But the crafty solicitor had measured the strength of his prey with great accuracy. It was not without design that the notice of the foreclosure of the mortgage had been delayed. “Give it time—give it time,” quoth that fisher of feeble humanity. He was right; and day after day did Harold Denison ponder over the old fisherman’s terms; at first contemptuously, then moodily, until at last he began to think that it was his duty to retain Glinn at all hazards. Once arrived thus far, the speciousness of the reasoning became easy and rapid. “The lands I received from my ancestors it is my duty to transmit to my descendants.” A fine country gentleman’s sentiment, that would have invariably ensured a round of applause at the farmer’s ordinary in any market town of respectable dimensions. Now, of course, it

was all plain sailing, morally. As a personal matter, the meanest lodgings at Hastings or St. Leonards would have sufficed. It were better so than to see a Denison of Glinn so vilely mated. But there were other ties to be considered. He, Harold Denison, had undoubtedly betrayed the trust of a long line of ancestors, played the devil with the property, and made the ancient name of Denison a byword with the children of Israel. There was but one way to restore all this, and that was contained in Pearman's proposition. He did not dwell much upon that as a practical suggestion, but kept theoretically soothing his mind with its being an acknowledged normal and everyday fact that the union of rank with riches was clearly designed by a beneficent Providence.

Then he began to think once more of his daughter. He felt compunction at the idea of yielding his handsome Maude to this lowborn suitor. But then Maude had never been to him what an only child is to most fathers. He had never quite forgiven the fact of her not being a son, and she had ever been more her mother's pet than his. Again, this candidate for her hand had been brought up a gentleman, had the mark of the university stamped on his baser composition, and, in short, had done much to compensate for the deficiency of birth with which he

had entered the world. He had seen young Pearman upon two or three occasions only. That gentleman, though the blood of his father ran strong in his veins, had quite sufficient tact to avoid showing it. He dressed quietly, and abstained from self-assertion when mixing with the class in which he was so anxious to establish himself. He was, naturally, too careful of his money to fall into the error of most parvenues, that of ostentatious display. If he spent money, and he would, freely, at times, there must be a *quid pro quo* for doing so. The little he knew of him had not jarred on Harold Denison. As to Maude, her affections must be wholly unfettered. If she could be brought to think of this man as a husband, it would really be a good thing for her in the end. And by such reasoning the squire gradually worked himself round to the conviction that it was, at all events, his duty to submit Pearman's proposal to Maude, and, further, to press it strongly on her attention.

But before Harold Denison had arrived at this conclusion, there had been much grief at Glinn. He had told his wife of the contemplated foreclosing of the mortgage, and explained to her that it meant ruin—that is, ruin inevitable, as far as their still continuing the possessors of Glinn went.

“Yes, Nellie, it's all over,” said the squire; “I'm

beaten at last. Dear old Glinn must go through the hands of the auctioneer, and become the property of whatever greasy trader happens to have most money at his disposal just now. It's hard lines for you to have to leave the place wherein I installed you as mistress so many years ago."

"Don't think of me," replied Mrs. Denison, tearfully. "I shall be always happy as long as I have you and Maude with me. It will be sad to leave all my old cottagers and almoners to the tender mercies of others; but oh! it will fall heaviest on you, Harold, to give up what has been the home of your people for so many generations!"

"I don't deny it. It will be a dreadful wrench to think of Glinn passing to strangers; but I suppose it must be so. The follies of our youth, Nell, smite us sharply as we grow old. We shall have to end our days in some cheap Continental town."

Very sad was Maude when she heard the evil tidings, and that she had but a short time left to look upon the grand old chesnuts, the groves of laurel, and the soft, pleasant, turfy vistas amid which she had been born. Bitterly she thought how the loss of all the accustomed surroundings would be felt by the gentle mother she adored; and well she divined what would be her father's sensations when, having left the home of his

ancestors, he should find himself exposed to the monotonous existence of some watering-place or dull Continental town ! How he would brood over the extinction of the Denisons of Glinn none realized more fully than Maude. She knew her father thoroughly ; she was a clever girl, and fully recognised his foibles and weaknesses. She comprehended the shock it would be to his family pride—what the loss of country pursuits would be to him ; what it would be to find himself a mere Mr. Denison on straitened means in some quiet place where gossip was rife, and your social status was pretty nearly gauged by the bills incurred at the butcher's and the wine merchant's. And then the girl thought, sorrowfully, how little she could do to alleviate all this. To her mother—ah ! yes, she could do much to lighten her troubles, and be a comfort to her ; but for her father, nothing—and the tears trickled through Maude's long lashes as she thought how little she could be to him.

Such, so far, were the results of the machinations of that experienced "fisher of men," Mr. Pearman, on the unfortunate family at Glinn.

I have told the ingenious process of reasoning by which Harold Denison had, at last, not only soothed his conscience, but arrived at the conclusion that, like the grim old Grecian, his duty required him to

sacrifice his daughter. I often think that old story a grand allegory. Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia, even yet, pretty constantly at St. George's, Hanover Square. We substitute the ring for the knife, and the wedding breakfast for the smoking sacrifice; and we wreath ourselves with flowers and silken raiment as we offer up our maidens at the shrine of Plutus. Who shall say that, after all, **that was not the meaning of the fable?**

But Harold Denison was conscious of an inward feeling that the newly-formed idea was an extremely awkward subject to broach either to his wife or daughter. That he had never even alluded to Pearman's proposal I need scarcely observe, and that it looked still less pleasant to touch upon now he had made up his mind to be an active supporter thereof, must be equally obvious. Still the clouds were gathering so thick over the house of Glinn, that no time was to be lost; and at last the squire nerved himself to the task, and sought his wife's boudoir, having previously ascertained that his daughter was out of the house.

"I want to talk something over with you, Nellie," he observed, as he entered. "I don't think that it will be quite pleasant to hear, but, at all events, it can't distress you, as you will have the power of deciding as you like about it."

Mrs. Denison raised her face anxiously to her husband's. Decision, on any point, was painful to her, and she was too well aware, from former experience, that this was but the prelude to some scheme in which her concurrence had already been practically marked out by her lord and master. Harold Denison's consultations, at such times, generally comprised a mere synopsis of his intentions, revealing some minor unpleasantness which he looked to her to carry out. Poor Mrs. Denison might well be diffident about such confidences; as a rule, they had borne but bitter fruit.

"What should you say," continued the squire, "if I tell you that it is possible to save Glinn to us yet?"

"Oh, Harold, can it be so?" cried Mrs. Denison, with clasped hands and beating heart. "No, you don't look like it; I see in your face there is more to follow. It is some bare chance, and your sanguine nature has led you astray concerning it."

"Nellie, don't be foolish. There is a way of arranging all these miserable money matters that has been submitted to me, and which, should we consent to, there is no doubt will prove perfectly satisfactory. I have turned it all well over in my mind, and though I have, as yet, come to no determination concerning it, yet I don't deem it altogether impracticable. Will you hear me patiently?"

"Yes, Harold," was the meek response.

"Well, what I want to talk to you about is this." The squire hesitated. It was not so easy, after all, to introduce the proposed sacrifice of Iphigenia to the mother who bore her. The old Greek mythology keeps the wife of Agamemnon entirely in the background on that occasion. Still, it had to be done. "Of course you must be aware," continued the squire, "that Maude is not only grown-up and handsome, but has arrived at an age when wooers may be expected."

"What do you mean?" asked the mother, her pale face flushing, and a half-anxious, half-frightened expression visible in her blue eyes.

"We will come to that presently. You know her admirers at the Xminster ball were numerous. A man of good property in this county solicits permission to pay his addresses to Maude. He can give her a good home and everything she can want now, while at the death of his father he will be the possessor of large landed estates in the county, besides considerable sums invested elsewhere."

The poor mother's heart beat quick. To whom was she to be asked to yield her darling? Who in all the county-side was worthy of her peerless Maude? She knew of none: yet she spoke not, but gazed eagerly into her husband's face, and

waited with high-strung nerves till he should speak again.

"Maude can have no attachment as yet?" inquired the squire, at length.

"No, I think not. How could she, Harold? The poor child has, as yet, seen so little of the world, and Maude is not one to give her heart away lightly."

"Maidens' hearts are stolen, sometimes, a good while before they are themselves aware of it," returned Denison, sententiously. "It is essential for my project that Maude should be fancy-free."

"She is," returned the mother, anxiously; "but tell me, who is this you think good enough for her? There is no one I know," she continued, sadly, "fit to claim my darling's hand."

"It's no use fencing any more," replied the squire. "Young Pearman was much struck with Maude at the Xminster ball, and solicits permission to win her, if he can."

"Pearman! What—the son of the lawyer!" cried Mrs. Denison. "You're joking, Harold, surely! You would never consent to such a match for a daughter of yours."

"Listen, Nellie," replied the squire, sadly. "Pearman has a heavy mortgage on the property; he has bought the best part of what has been sold,

and Maude's marriage with his son would once more consolidate Glinn. Don't interrupt me!" he exclaimed, in answer to a despairing gesture of his wife's. "I don't say if things stood with us as they did in the old times I'd listen to such a proposal as this; but, Nellie, if Maude could make up her mind to it, Glinn would remain ours, and that would lighten the remainder of my time in this world, and yours too, wife mine."

"Not unless Maude were happy," murmured the poor mother.

I can fancy the contempt with which a Belgravian matron might regard Mrs. Denison's last remark. A penniless girl offered wealth, country house, &c., and her mother maundering about her happiness. Oh, it is too absurd! But, you see, this poor simple country-bred lady had not yet mastered the two great dogmas of our present civilization: "Thou shalt believe in gold, jewels, land, miniver, and ermine; but from love, limited income, a struggle with the world, or a scarcity of silk dresses, good Lord, deliver us!"

"Look here, Nellie," said the squire, at length, "you can't imagine for one instant that I have any intention of coercing Maude on the point. Only give it a trial. Be reasonable. You say she cares for no one else at present. Let her see young

Pearman, and like him, if she can. If not, there's an end of it ; but if she could fancy him, it would be well for all of us. Ruin stares us in the face—this would avert it. She, poor girl, will be left but indifferently off should anything happen to me ; this insures her position, and luxuries. I don't see why it shouldn't be," and Denison shot a keen glance at the pale face opposite.

"I will do what you would have me, Harold," returned his wife, quietly. "I don't think that I have ever seen Mr. Pearman, but I had formed such high hopes for Maude ! I never crossed you yet ; it is not likely I should begin now, when you're in such trouble. But, oh, I do wish Glinn could be saved in any other way !"

"You have been a good wife to me, Nellie dear," said the squire, as he rose, and pressed his lips to Mrs. Denison's fair cheek. "You don't see this in the right light, but you will when you think it over. Meanwhile, you will do what I want—eh ?"

"I will tell Maude when you deem it necessary," returned the soft voice of his wife ; "but, Harold, I can't think it right ; though you know best."

"You have not thought it over as I have. Do so, and you will change your mind," said Denison, as he left his wife's boudoir.

Sadly mused the wife over her husband's com-

munication. Quiet, undemonstrative woman as she was, yet Elinor Denison had been brought up from her cradle a thorough believer in the dogma of caste and even her gentle nature rebelled at the idea that a daughter of hers should wed the son of a low-born attorney. We know her passionate idolatry of Maude, surpassing even a mother's love. It is easy to picture the bitter tears she shed after that morning's interview. She was a woman naturally given to weeping. In trouble

" Her grand resource
Was to sit down and cry, of course."

No passionate storm of lamentation, but a gentle shower of mourning. As Harold Denison's wife she had had manifold opportunities of practising her vocation, yet I doubt whether he ever left salter tears running down her cheeks than he did that bright spring afternoon.





CHAPTER V.

MAUDE IN TROUBLE.

SELDOME did eye rest on a prettier picture than was made by bonnie Maude Denison this early April morning, as she stands at the entrance of one of the grassy Glinn vistas, fondling a black-and-tan setter, her own especial pet. The close-fitting French grey merino dress, with the plain linen collar and cuffs, set off her beautifully-moulded figure to perfection, while the cerise neck-ribbon just relieves and gives warmth to her somewhat neutral-tinted robe. Moreover, that she had just returned from a successful raid on the conservatory, a snow-white camellia in her bosom, and its blood-red sister coquettishly twisted in her glossy brown hair, sufficiently attested—those crown-

jewels of the floral world looking more in place now than when adorning their parent stems.

Yes, Nature may be improved upon, and adorning the silken tresses of beauty is, to my mind, what camellias were created for. Well, yes; perhaps there is the lower sphere of male buttonholes for them: a sort of purgatory, I presume, for sinful and erring camellias—blossoms that have gone astray.

“Yes, Dan, dear,” said the young lady, as she kissed the setter’s nose, “weren’t we in luck this morning to find old Judkins out of the way; and haven’t we committed a grand robbery?”—and Maude glanced down at the great bouquet of hot-house blossoms she clasped in her little white hands, and which, taking advantage of the crabbed old gardener’s absence, she had plucked in the conservatory. “Half-past nine, Dan. Come along, sir; there will be barely time to arrange the flowers before mamma comes down. No, never mind the laurels, we don’t want to beat them now. Breakfast, Dan—bones, sir;” and Maude, passing through the iron gate that separated the pleasure from the garden, tripped lightly across the lawn, and closely followed by her fourfooted friend, stepped through the library window.

“Good-morning, sweet mother mine,” cried

Maude, as Mrs. Denison entered the breakfast-room. "Only look at the plunder I've brought you! Dan and I found old Judkins' flowers unguarded this morning, and I gathered and plucked till that stupid old dog wagged down an azalea with his tail, and then we ran—Dan, didn't we? for fear of the wrath to come. Isn't that a bouquet, mamma, to greet you in April?"

"Yes, love—glorious. No need to tell me Judkins was away, or never would his pets have been despoiled in this wise."

"No, cross old thing! He thinks flowers were made only to look at on their stems, and not to wear or decorate rooms."

The entrance of Harold Denison here checked conversation. He nodded a careless "Good-morning" to his daughter, and then plunged moodily into his correspondence. He found nothing there, apparently, to raise his spirits. At length, thrusting his letters into his pockets, he rose.

"Well," he said, "things look blacker and blacker. It's no use struggling; the sooner my scheme is tried, the better. Do what you promised yesterday. Delay is useless."

"But, Harold ——" pleaded his wife, as the ever-ready tears rose to her eyes.

"Don't be foolish. It's our only chance. Under-

stand," he said, crossing over to his wife's chair, and lowering his voice so that his daughter could not catch his words—"just put it before her in a commonsense way this morning. How can you tell she will object. She can do as she likes about it. I have no wish to coerce her in any way ; but, mind, tell her the whole truth. It is only fair the proposal should be laid before her. I'll come up to your room after luncheon, and you can tell me how she takes it;" and, turning on his heel, Harold Denison left the room.

"What's the matter, my mother?" said Maude, as she stole to Mrs. Denison's side, and, passing her arms round her neck, laid her fair, fresh young cheek against the pale, worn, troubled face. "More of these dreadful money-miseries, I suppose ; but don't look so tearful over it. Papa looks so gloomy, and you so sad, it's enough to frighten poor me. Even if he has lost some more money, I suppose we shall always have enough to live upon ; and if you and I, mother, can't have new dresses for ever so long, that's nothing to be very sad about."

I am afraid Maude Denison is displaying an ignorance of the world, and a disregard to the vanities and gewgaws thereof, that may seem a little high-strained ; but recollect that she is but eighteen, that the Xmaister was her first ball, and that, owing to

her father's pride and straitened circumstances, she has lived a very secluded life. I do not mean to say that Maude was quite what our neighbours describe as an *ingénue*, but she was far removed from the conventional young lady of these days.

Few were the strangers that came within the gates of Glinn of late years. Harold Denison scorned to entertain unless he could do so with all the old lavish profusion—that prodigal hospitality of former times which had entailed such bitterness in his present daily bread. His wife, naturally an extremely sensitive woman, shrunk also from mixing in society in a much more humble and modest way than she had been wont to do. She was not of the temperament to face the half-whispered comments and upraised eyebrows of her country neighbours: “Poor thing! I hear he has run through everything; even the carriage-horses have to be put down.” Remarks of this kind were past her endurance, and so it was that since she left school, some two years ago, Maude had led a very secluded life.

True, many an old friend of the Denisons had offered to take care of the girl to various gaities in the county, even if they could not induce Mrs. Denison to come to their houses and chaperone her own daughter; but all such invitations have been

met with a brief though courteous refusal. Poor lady, she had more than once pleaded in her darling's behalf; but, wrapped in his own selfish pride, Harold Denison said fiercely, he would be patronised by no one.

And so Maude grew up like some wild flower, though not "born to bloom and blush unseen." For are there not already two who would fain pluck the wild flower and gather it to their bosoms if they may?

Did Maude know she was handsome? Of course she did. She wanted no Xminster ball to tell her that. What girl over fifteen, in the most primitive of nations, having beauty, is unaware of it? If there are no looking-glasses, are there not deep pellucid waters that will serve as such?—Nature's mirrors whereby to wreath wild flowers in the hair? Maidens of our advanced civilisation may be haunted with misgivings. Given the face of an angel, can we tell how it may stand the "make-up" that fashion seems to have decreed in these days? How dark eyes and eyelashes will go with golden hair is, of course, an open question. I can fancy the nervousness of those dusky Indian belles till they have ascertained the effect of paint and pigments, and what anxious moments our remote ancestresses must have had when they first put on their woad!

Thus it came about that Maude Denison had been out but on very few occasions, and had it not been that her godmother, who having gold to bequeath, was too important a person to be trifled with, had insisted on bearing her off, she had never seen that memorable Xminster ball.

Twelve o'clock, and the sun shines brightly into Mrs. Denison's boudoir, throwing rich tints through Maude's brown tresses, and lighting up the pale face of her mother : that joyous, tearful, capricious, womanish April sun—so like a woman in its glowing strength, so like her, again, in its overclouded weakness ! Poor Mrs. Denison is still pondering on how to begin the dread task her lord has set her. She knows that glozing phrase of "not wishing to coerce the girl's decision," is but the meanest of mockeries; she can look back upon that airy preface of "not that I wish to sway you, my dearest Elinor," in so many cases, and remembers too well that whatever may have been her misgivings or dislikes, the programme has generally been carried out in its original integrity. She has borne these things meekly. They concerned but herself; now they threaten her daughter. Weak woman as she is, she would fain stand at bay here. Still, though intuitively knowing that it was false, there is that specious reasoning of her husband's, that the thing ought to be submitted

to Maude herself. Again the tendrils of her affections are twined round dear old Glinn ; she feels what a bitter wrench it would be to say farewell to the old place. Above all, there is the strong will of that selfish husband, whom she still loves so dearly, under whose thrall her life has passed.

What slaves these weak women are to those miserable clay idols they have set up only to fall down before and worship ! Adoration is the main part of a woman's love. How they still revere these worthless images, despite the daily proof they have as to what miserable potter's ware they are composed of ! " Help me in my unbelief ! " ought to be their prayer. But they go on, even when bruised and beaten, still firmly believing in their old romantic ideal. Oh, yes, women will shut their eyes to many things sooner than give up that dream of their girlhood. They would sooner remain blind than awake to find themselves utterly bankrupt, and their account far overdrawn at Cupid and Company's. A woman will forgive the man she loves everything except inconstancy, and only cling the closer to him through crime or trouble. But there must never have arisen a doubt in her mind that she is not still sole mistress of his heart ; and with all his faults, Harold Denison had never brought the tears to his wife's eyes in this wise.

But I am wandering far away from the mistress of Glinn, still musing on her unwelcome task. Like her, I am loth to begin, though the miserable story must be told, for the furtherance of this narrative. It is stealing the bloom off the girlhood of such a maiden as Maude when you first break to her that she is put up to auction as veritably as if she stood in the Constantinople slave-market. The Turk has suppressed it; but in the West the trade goes on merrily, and Lord Penzance finds it quite as much as he can do to rectify the mistakes that occur from ignoring natural feeling in the contract matrimonial.

“Maude, dear,” at last observes Mrs. Denison, “whom did you like best of all your partners at the Xminster ball?”

“Like best!” and Maude’s great grey eyes opened wide as she uncoiled herself from the sofa upon which she lounged, intent on the latest novel Mudie had furnished. “What makes you ask that, mother?”

“Never mind! Tell me.”

“Well, I don’t know; I never thought about it. Gus Brisden was nice, and Charlie Tollamache—he’s a dragoon of some kind, you know—he was great fun, and valsed very well. Then there was Mr. Handley, not very young, but I got on very well with him. I think, though, I liked dancing

with Gren best; he *can* valse,—and then we had such laughing over other people; but he got sulky towards the finish, I'm sure I don't know why. I'm very fond of Gren, you know, mother, but he bullies me and can be very nasty at times, and the finish of that ball happened to be one of those times. I don't know why," continued the girl, meditatively, "unless it was my dancing with that Mr. Pearman; what could that matter to him?"

"And did you and Gren part on bad terms?"

"No; I came down and gave him his coffee before he went away, and he—kissed me—and so we parted friends."

I think, had I been Grenville Rose, I should have preferred Maude being a little more reticent about the kiss. Still, the slight hesitation in her speech, the slight flush that crossed her cheek as she alluded to it, were favourable signs to an astute observer. He had kissed her as his cousin all his life—why should the recollection make her blush and hesitate now? Young people situated in this way may like each other for years; the explosion of some æsthetic force suddenly awakens love. More often than not the train is lit through the precautions taken to prevent it. The doctrine of separation is in high favour among chaperones for producing an *eclaircisse-*

ment, but they often forget that when using it with a view to a contrary result.

"But you don't say anything about Mr. Pearman. Maude; did you like him?"

"Well, he was pleasant and amusing enough. I only had one quadrille with him, you know. But Gren scolded so about my dancing with him at all; and said he wasn't "form," or "bad form," or something or other—meaning, in short, that I ought not to have stood up with him. If he wasn't fit to be danced with, mother, why did they introduce him to me?" and Maude raised her pretty eyebrows, as if she had propounded a regular poser.

"I see no reason in the world. He is not one of the old county families, but his father is very rich, and he will take his place, ere many years are over, in the county. It depends, of course, a good deal upon how he marries. Suppose he fancied you, now, Maude—we are very poor, you know,—what would you say to it?"

"I!—Mother dear, what makes you ask such a question? I'm sure I don't know. Glinn is happy home enough for me at present. But I don't think, if I did marry, I should like there to be any doubt about my husband being a gentleman; and they—that is, I mean Gren—didn't seem to think he was."

"Gren, my dear, is prejudiced. Young Mr. Pear-

man has had an university education, and though his father was a nobody, he mixes, I'm told, with all the best people round."

"Well, it don't much matter ; I'm never likely to be called on to decide. I think I'd rather not, if it was so. But you don't mean to say, mother, you are trying to fit me with a husband out of my ball-partners! Oh, you scandalous matchmaking mamma!"—and Maude laughed merrily.

"But suppose I was, whom would you choose?"

"Oh dear, none of them. If it came to the worst, I should say I was engaged to Gren."

"My dear Maude!"

"No ; dear Maude never had the chance yet ; he never asked her, and I don't think it at all likely he ever will. But I tell you what, mother, if I really was in such a quandary, I think I should ask him. I could tell him afterwards, you know, it was only to get myself out of a scrape, and Gren's been doing that for me always ——"

"Stop, Maude, and listen seriously to what I have to say to you : Mr. Pearman has asked in earnest to be allowed to pay his addresses to you. Your father recommends you to think over it quietly and soberly. Bear in mind that we are very poor, and that he will be very rich."

"Mr. Pearman want to marry me!" and the

girl's *riante* face changed into a stare of blank astonishment; "why, I never saw him but once."

"No, love; but it is true, for all that."

"Well, mother, I can hardly believe it; but somebody had better introduce that song Gren's so fond of humming to Mr. Pearman's notice;" and then, with an expression of mock-demureness irresistibly arch, Maude broke out with—

" ' Don't be too sure, for hearts just caught
Are seldom now to market brought;
The best, they say, are given away,
Nor kept to be sold on a market-day.' "

On my word, I'm obliged to Mr. Pearman. I presume he thinks girls, like hothouse fruit, are a mere question of what you will give for them. Best let him know, mother mine, that your daughter is neither to be wooed nor won in that fashion."

"But Maude, my darling ——!"

"Yes, and intend to remain so," laughed the girl merrily.

" ' My heart it is free,
And ever will be,

'Till my destiny's lord comes a-wooing of me.' "

And the sooner the fact is broken to Mr. Pearman that he is not 'my destiny's lord,' the better."

"Stop, child—listen to me," and the nervous tremor in her mother's voice arrested Maude's mad-cap humour instantly. She knew every inflexion of that dearly-loved voice, and her quick ear

detected coming trouble, much as the sailor foresees the storm in that peculiar sobbing sound the wind sometimes gives forth shortly before the tempest bursts.

In a second she dropped quietly on her knees by Mrs. Denison's side, and leaning on the arm of her chair, said, "There's more to come, mother; you haven't told me all yet."

"No, my dearest; I had hoped so differently. I mean—I told your father, in short ——;" and here Mrs. Denison fairly broke down, and wept copiously.

Maude petted, soothed and coaxed, as she had done on many a previous occasion, and between the showers of tears learnt how much they were in the hands of the Pearmans; how that their remaining at Glinn was an impossibility unless the Pearmans came to their assistance; and how her hand was the price they placed on standing in the breach between Harold Denison and his creditors. About the foregoing of their own claims the poor lady wisely said nothing. Better Maude should think her future husband stood chivalrously forward in her father's support, with the prospect of her fair self as his guerdon, than she should know that her hand was the sole bribe which induced him to forbear seizing upon Glinn.

The saucy smile had left the girl's lips by the

time she comprehended the sad story. It was replaced by a pale anxious look, such as had never been seen before on Maude Denison's face.

"You can't mean this, mother," she said, at length. "You surely don't wish that I should marry this man, whom I can't say I dislike, for I don't even know him enough to tell whether I do or no; but that I am to take this man for a husband without any reference to my own feelings—you don't intend that, do you?"

"I don't know what will become of us if you don't, Maude," gasped Mrs. Denison.

"And is it not possible that we could live without Glinn?" inquired her daughter.

"What would your father do?" moaned the mother once more, truer to him even still than to the child she adored so.

"It is hard!" said Maude, and her young face grew stern in expression as she spoke. "Do you think it quite fair that I am to throw my life's happiness away at eighteen to save Glinn? Mother, I know nothing of the world, but a man surely brings a bad introduction to a girl's heart who seeks her as Mr. Pearman would apparently seek me. I don't think I'm a romantic fool, but I never thought to leave your side in this wise. Of course I know girls do marry for money; but—but—I had—had

hoped I should be different," and here Maude was seized with an hysterical choking in the throat, which though it only drew a few tears from her own eyes, brought forth another shower from Mrs. Denison's.

I really am shocked, for the sake of my readers, at the amount of tears introduced into this part of my story. "Umbrellas up!" would have made an appropriate heading to this chapter; but what am I to do? You see, Mrs. Denison is one of those women who naturally dissolve into—may I say, mist?—on the most trifling occasions, and come down in torrents when things go hard with them. And, bear in mind, she was performing the hardest task that had ever fallen to her lot as yet.

"No use crying about it, mother," said Maude, gulping down her agitation bravely. "I am going up to my own room to think it all over; but come what may, I feel at present you will have to let Mr. Pearman know that I'm grateful for the honour he has done me, but respectfully decline anything further."

When Maude reached her own room, she sat down and began to muse over all her mother had told her. Had it come to this really, that it rested with her to save her parents? What was she to do? I have said before that she was not like the

young ladies of this world. She was rather behind the age in many of her ideas. She was very young, and had, moreover, a tinge of that dear old-fashioned romance about her which is at such a terrible discount in these utilitarian days. "What can there be to think about?" cries Belgravia. "Preserve me from such an imbecile daughter!" shrieks Tyburnia. But Maude, after thinking for half-an-hour, with set face and knit brows, suddenly rose with a smile rippling over her pretty face, and while the midday sun still glinted through her bonnie brown hair, sat down to write to Grenville Rose.

"He always gets me out of scrapes," she murmured, softly; "he must out of this, though (and here she even laughed) I'm afraid Gren will think this what he calls a 'big un.'"





CHAPTER VI.

AN APPEAL FOR HELP.

GRENVILLE ROSE dwelt in the Temple. There, in a couple of pleasant rooms, he smoked pipes, read musty law-books, the latest periodicals, *Bell's Life*, and waited for business. Though there was very far from being any asceticism about Grenville Rose, yet he stuck soberly and honestly to his trade. If the work didn't come, he couldn't help it. He was always in the way, and an assiduous attender at the Westminster Courts. But if you are Coke on Lyttleton, strongly impregnated with the departed afflatus of Erskine and Ellenborough, you cannot show it until you get an opening. The beginning of the legal profession is doomed to be principally observation. Attorneys are far from being

speculative, on the subject of undeveloped talent. It is not given to everyone to have Sir Jonah Barrington's chance of a friendly judge, who insisted on his continuing the case he had begun, in consequence of his leader being temporarily out of court. So that whether Grenville Rose was a coming lawyer, or a pretentious impostor, was still concealed in the womb of time. In the meanwhile, the nothing he had to do he, at all events, did conscientiously—more, a good deal, than can be predicated of many of us.

He strolls leisurely out of his bedroom, in dressing gown and slippers, the day after Maude's resolution, and glancing round his breakfast-table, takes little notice of the heap of letters that lie thereon. His attention, on the contrary, is arrested by the absence of some condiment he peculiarly affects. After indulging in a solo on the bell, which produces no apparent result, he opens the window and runs up the vocal scale on, "William," terminating, crescendo, in "Wil-li-am!" which seems to produce some slight commotion, at length, in a boy with a pewter, and a companion furnished with shoe-brushes, who are lightening the hours by pitch and toss. Satisfied with this result, he first opens the morning paper.

Grenville Rose is not in the least addicted to the

pursuit or study of racing ; still, like most men of his age about town, he very frequently hears it talked of. He knows the names of the prominent favourites for the coming great three-year-old events of the season. Has he not more than one friend who has asked him to book himself for a Greenwich dinner in the event of some Derby contingency coming off satisfactorily? He throws his eye lazily over the sporting intelligence, and under the head of "Betting on the Two Thousand," he perceives "Five to two against Coriander—taken freely."

"S'pose he'll about win. Suit Silky Dallison down to the ground, I presume ; not that I know much about it. But as he hath bidden me to the consumption of clicquot and bait, if Coriander wins at Epsom, it is fair to presume he'd like to see him well through 'his smalls,' to begin with."

Ah ! we go blundering on in our blindness and ignorance. Can even the most far-sighted of us ever predicate twenty-four hours ahead ? What a mess Providence makes of our intricate calculations ! What shallow fools we seem, after all our study ! I wonder what Grenville Rose would have said, if anybody had hinted to him that within ten days his destiny would be bound up with Coriander's ? Can you not fancy his laughing retort, "Good heavens ! I never race ! 'What's Hecuba to me,

or I to Hecuba?" Yet it will be so. Much as yours, my dear young lady, may be swayed by that good-looking man who offered you his *Punch* to read in the train last week. You don't know his name even, nor he yours; but the attraction of cohesion is wonderful, and you got on very well together. Why is it ships near each other in a calm?

Grenville tosses the paper on one side, and in a careless way takes up his letters. Two or three are thrown aside; but his pulse quickens, and his handsome features flush a little, as he catches sight of that firm, delicate hand he knows so well. Maude's letter had been near the bottom of the pile, or he had not glanced over the paper before reading it. That *belle cousine* of his had wound her way into his heart strangely of late. He hardly knew himself how it had all come to pass. He had bullied her as a boy; he even, till quite lately, had snubbed her as a man. He had liked her, ay, loved her, in cousinly fashion, all his life. How was he to have dreamt that the gawky schoolgirl who accompanied him in his fishing expeditions at Glinn was to grow into the lovely girl Maude had of late blossomed into? He was no fool, and had as much command over his passions as five-and-twenty, that sets up for no superlative virtue and lives in the world, can usually lay claim to. That

anything could be more injudicious than a love affair between himself, with mere undefined prospects, and the daughter of his ruined, spendthrift uncle, no one could be more clearly aware. That if Maude Denison married, it must be somebody with means and position, he thoroughly understood. That he should at present marry anybody, he quite recognised as an impossibility. And yet, with all these theoretical axioms distinctly present to his mind, he was forced to admit to himself that he was over head-and-ears in love with his cousin. That he had never even hinted it to her was a fact upon which he gave himself most extraordinary credit. That she had as yet given him no earthly reason to suppose he was anything to her but Cousin Gren was a circumstance that he brooded over sulkily and despondingly. With these correct and high-principled views, it should have been made matter of great gratulation ; but you see it was not. I am afraid it will ever be so. The right people never do fall in love with each other ; while, from the days Helen left Menelaus to the present time, the converse of the proposition seems inexhaustible and unchangeable.

Strange fatality, that makes those who have nothing so terribly *épris* with those who have less ! Thus philosophers dogmatise. Malthus propounds

his creed, and modern philosophers emigration. John Stuart Mill discourses on the rights of women, while those sanguine adventurous young people pass through their lotus-dream of love, and wake to eat the bitter bread of improvident marriage.

But all this while Grenville Rose had been reading Maude's epistle. His face darkens as he does so, the brows contract, and a curse breaks at last from his lips in a low, guttural tone that bodes bad times for somebody, supposing that Grenville possesses power equal to his inclination.

"My God!" he muttered, and the fierce expression of his countenance was changed to one of despair and anguish. "That brute Pearman! My instinct didn't fail me. Better I'd have dislocated his cursed neck by throwing him downstairs that night than this. And the poor child appeals to me to help her! What can I do?"

Once more he glances at the letter—again he reads the paragraph: "Gren, dear, you have been my resource in all my scrapes since I can remember. Do come to my rescue now; what am I to do? My childish troubles of bygone days were not of much account, whatever they might look at the time. This seems extinguishing the sunshine of my life on the threshold—as if I was doomed, as I heard you say not long ago,

“‘To grasp the white throats of my dreams, and strangle them one by one.’

I have said I cannot, I dare not. Both papa and mother say I am to decide for myself. But it isn't so—you know, Gren, it isn't. There's papa, more sneering and gloomy than ever, suggesting that we had better make the most of Glinn during the remaining few weeks that it remains to us—as I have decided to *give away* the property. Mother, of course, all tears; and papa bullies her worse than ever. Oh, tell me what to do, Gren, for I am very miserable. I can't stand it much longer—I know I can't. I shall have to give in; I cannot bear to see mother always in tears. I almost wish I was dead, I do indeed; and yet I don't want to die.”

“Yes,” he mutters, after reading it through for about the twentieth time; “it's easy to see the whole thing. My precious uncle intends you shall marry Pearman, so that he may finish his days in Glinn. My aunt, poor soul, is weeping a Dead Sea over the arrangement, and having her soul harried out besides. Maude—Maude, my darling, how can I help you? Pretty chance of a pauper like myself being much use on the occasion,” he mused, with a bitter sneer. “She never says, poor child, by the way, what sum, if any, would stop the gap—though, of course, there must be a price. However,

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that is a question there is no use in raising. Of course it's thousands; and to raise a few hundreds would require all my ingenuity, to say nothing of terminating in my eventual destruction; not but what it's little I'd think of that just now, to save Maude. My love, I am powerless!" And Grenville Rose leant his head upon his hands, and tasted the bitterest sorrow this world can afford—that of an appeal for succour from the woman whom he loved, and the knowledge that he was powerless to help her even a hair's-breadth in her bitter anguish. Better to stand by her deathbed than this!

Our nineteenth-century training makes us bear such trials well. Stoicism in grief or difficulties is the free translation of *noblesse oblige*. The elopement of your wife, or the breaking of the bank that contains your all, ought not to prevent your placidly finishing your cigar before you go off to inquire into particulars. But do not believe, my brethren, that when the mask is dropped, feelings are not much the same as of yore. Bitter tears are shed over worthless women, and deep lamentations made over rotten investments in the privacy of the bed-chamber. The matutinal razor sweeps the chin at times with a strange fascination for one strong free stroke at the jugular vein: a morbid feeling to end all this

weary straggle, and cut the knot of existence. A wellknown writer, the other day, laid down "It was better to be bored than to be miserable." I can't say I agree with him. I would rather be miserable. Being bored is misery *in extremis*. Men are miserable because they cannot attain their desires—

"Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum."

But your bored man is left without a Corinth to wish for.

For more than an hour does Grenville pace his apartment, musing over Maude's letter. But no! he can neither see help to be rendered, nor even anything to justify the slightest interference on his part. Then he thought savagely of the old duelling days: how easy it would have been to have picked a quarrel in those good old times, and run his chance of disqualifying Pearman through the medium of a pistol-bullet. But we have changed all that; and when we quarrel nowadays, we employ counsel instead of firearms. I suppose it is all for the best, though I take it there was more politeness in general society when the being rude had to be so speedily justified. Finally he wound up with a fierce execration—

"And now all things are d——d, one feels at ease."

I cannot say this was quite Grenville Rose's case,

though there is a spice of truth in that line. I am not advocating swearing—it is coarse and bad style, to say the least of it; but it is a great relief to some men—a safety-valve for a good deal of ill-humour. I recollect a story against a friend of mine at a *battue* that bears on this. He was posted at a hot corner just before luncheon. The ladies of the house came down to join the sportsmen in their meal, and to witness an artistic slaughter. My friend by no means did his *devoir*, and pheasant after pheasant sailed over his head, quite unaffected by his innocuous breech-loader. At length, utterly disgusted, he handed his gun to his loader, and turned his attention to mutton pies and sherry. That evening, in the smoking-room, the tide of chaff ran high, and a good deal of it flowed his way, but he bore it meekly and spoke not.

“Well, Jim,” said one of his chums, at length, “I had no idea that you could have been so demoralised by a gallery. You never touched a feather after the ladies joined us ——”

“You are quite right, Stephenson,” was the reply, “though you don’t quite understand the wherefore. It *was* the ladies. I always indulge in awful language when I miss a rocketeer; to-day I couldn’t. *I can’t shoot if I can’t swear!*”

Grenville had made up his mind that he was

powerless; but still, all the same, Maude's letter must be answered. This, again, was not so easy to do. When the girl you are in love with appeals to you tearfully to save her from being married to somebody else, the obvious course would seem to be to run away with her yourself. But, as George Eliot says, "Running away, especially when spoken of as 'absconding,' seems, at a distance, to offer a good modern substitute for the right of sanctuary; but seen closely, it is often found inconvenient and scarcely possible." So, though to emulate young Lochinvar and bear off your fair Ellen of Netherby may seem the proper thing to do on the first blush of such occasion, yet, on mature reflection, it may prove hardly feasible. Mrs. Lochinvar must be clothed and fed, while the reiving and raiding by which that adventurous gallant doubtless supported the lady of his love would, in these days, be known by the prosaic term of "robbery with violence." The attention of Colonel Henderson and his myrmidons, the grave consideration of his conduct by twelve of his countrymen, and an eloquent oration, rather to his disadvantage, by a criminal court judge, would probably be the termination of young Lochinvar's career in these days.

What is he to write? What is he to say? Can you not guess? Of course he will sit down and do

the very thing he should not. He can't help, but he can complicate her troubles. Love is essentially a selfish passion. Having no consolation to offer her, no assistance to render her, he betakes himself to his desk, and pours forth his story of love and lamentation. He exhorts her not to marry Pearman, but gives her no hint of how she is to combat the difficulties that surround her. He pours forth, in good, honest, genuine terms, the tale of his love; he dwells on the certainty of his having a home ere long to offer her through his own exertions (a purely poetical flight), and winds up with a tremendous peroration about having loved her from her cradle. He has done nothing of the kind. His love is a child of something under a twelvemonth's growth; still

“ Females love exaggeration; ”

and though I fear all lovers romance fearfully, they thoroughly believe in their figments at the time. Then comes another sheet of postscript about “ can she love him ? ” etc.; he shall know no rest till he gets her answer. And after it is all done and posted, Grenville Rose feels more uneasy than ever. He is not thinking so much of poor Maude's troubles as What will she say to his declaration of love ? He racks his brain for every trace of favour she has shown him all the past year. Sweet and cou-

ainly she has been ever, but no sign of love can he recall. "Fool that I have been!" he mutters; "I have been so careful not to give her a hint of my feelings, and now—well, I suppose I shall get my *cong  *. I wish I had that letter back. No, I don't. I don't know, in short ——" and the last fragment contained pretty well the gist of Grenville's thoughts at present.

Ah, these love-letters! how shall we judge them? They are not always sent judiciously. I have the two sweetest that ever were printed before me now, and one of them is from Mary Queen of Scots to Bothwell, giving her consent to Darnley's murder, and imploring her lover never to think ill of her for doing so. "As to obey you, my dear love, I spare neither honour, conscience, hazard, nor greatness;" and it finishes in these words, "It is late; I would write to you for ever; yet now I will kiss your hand, and end."

The letter of no good woman, I trow, but the letter of such a woman as men under her thrall will die for. I fancy as many men died for Mary of Scotland as for any woman since the world began, unless you regard the siege of Troy as an historical fact.





CHAPTER VII.

“GUTTA CAVAT LAPIDEM.”

MAUDE, as she has already explained, has been having a hard time of it at Glinn these last two or three days. Life has been all so easy to her so far, that she hardly realises the facing of this, her first genuine trouble. She is awaiting the post anxiously this morning; Gren is certain to write to her by return, and her belief in Gren is unbounded. What he is to do, poor child! she has not in any way thought about; but he always had smoothed her path when the big stones encumbered it, and she has implicit faith in his ability to do so in the present case.

Once more the icy breakfast-table she so dreads. Her father looks at her as a culprit who would sub-

vert the old Grecian story, and sacrifice her parent instead of presenting her throat to the knife. Mrs. Denison evidently looks upon her as a sainted martyr. She loves and sympathises with her daughter; she approves of her spirited refusal, but she cannot desert her old idols. "The king can do no wrong." Harold Denison's opinion must be hers outwardly, though in her heart of hearts she may rebuke herself for not being on her daughter's side.

"A letter from Grenville for you, Maude," said her father, as he threw it across. She and her cousin were regular correspondents, so that it excited no remark; yet the mother noticed that the girl, instead of tearing it open as was her wont, slipped it quietly into the pocket of her dress. Maude felt as if she possessed a talisman against her troubles, and determined to read it in the solitude of her own chamber, and there she betook herself as soon as breakfast was over.

Her cheek flushed as she perused it, and the large grey eyes opened wide with astonishment. Grenville's tale of passionate love would have moved most girls, albeit he has not as yet in these pages figured to any great advantage—still Grenville Rose had a shrewd-enough head upon his shoulders, and was a comely man to look upon, to boot. He told his love well, and few maidens, even if they do not

reciprocate it, can listen unmoved when that old-world story is passionately told them. There was plenty of warmth in Grenville's fervent pleading, and after reading the letter through twice, Maude dropped the paper on her lap, and, utterly oblivious to her troubles, fell into a reverie.

It seemed so strange. She had loved and admired Gren as long as she could remember, but she had never thought of him in this way—at least, she did not think so, and yet, almost unconsciously to herself, of late she had been more solicitous about gaining his good opinion and pleasing him than of yore. “To think Gren should care about me in this way!” she murmured; “and I—do I love him? I don't know. He's nicer, and better, and cleverer than anyone I ever met. Why didn't he tell me this when he was here last?” I think I'd rather have heard it from himself. Ah! but doesn't he tell me why not?” and the girl once more took up the letter and read:—

“All this, my darling, has been on my lips for months, but how could I tell you?—how could I seek your love who had not even a home to offer? What the struggle has been to see you so often, and yet keep down what surged within me, I only know. When I kissed your cheek at parting last time, I nearly clasped you in my arms, and poured out the

secret of my soul to you. I did not; it seemed madness—it is perhaps madness now; but, my darling, I could not lose you. When you tell me that another seeks the prize I covet, right or wrong, I must speak. Maude, you must decide between us. Can you trust me, and wait?”

Once more the letter fell in her lap, and the softened grey eyes and slightly-flushed face augured well for Grenville Rose’s wooing.

“Yes,” she muttered, softly, “I think I love him now as he would have me; and if I don’t quite yet—for it seems all so new to me—I know I could shortly. Gren, dear, what am I to write to you? I think it must be ‘Yes’.”

It was wrong, she thought, to keep Gren in suspense when he was so dreadfully in love with her; so that night’s mail bore a timid fluttering little note, the receipt of which produced such a tremendous state of exhilaration in that young Templar, that anybody would have thought he was engaged to “a lass wi’ a tocher,” and contemplating matrimony with four horses, instead of having turned down one of the most tortuous, tangled, briery paths of Cupid’s ambrosial garden.

Yes! nectar and lotus-eating, love-letters and walking on air for a few days, a nepenthe for the reckless pair of you. But there is a Nemesis

coming that will rend these silken chains ; when lawyers' deeds meet billet-doux, the battle is unequal, I ween.

But poor Maude, after the first flush of exultation that enters the breast of every girl at a welcome declaration of love, quickly awoke to the fact that her position was not a whit improved by it. She confided her engagement to her mother, and for the first time in her life Maude beheld Mrs. Denison really angry. "I'm surprised and disgusted with Grenville," said that lady. "It's too bad of him, taking advantage of a child like you in this manner. I like him, always have liked him, and, under different circumstances, would have sooner seen you his wife than any man's I know. But he can barely keep himself as yet, and must know that his thinking of a wife at all is foolish in the extreme, and that thinking of you is simply absurd. He's behaved very badly, and if you don't promise to write and break it off, you can say, by my desire, I shall tell your father all about it."

"Oh, mother, you won't do that," said Maude.

"Not unless you oblige me," said Mrs. Denison, sternly.

Poor Maude was electrified. That the mother she had been always accustomed to pet, and do as she liked with, should suddenly rise against her like

this, was past her comprehension. Yet to anyone who has made character his study, nothing can be more in accordance with the usual law in such cases. Weak, feeble characters, when, either from caprice or driven by necessity, they exert such power as may be in their hands, invariably do it tyrannically and despotically.

Mrs. Denison has suffered of late from the stern rule of her lord and master. In spite of all her love for her daughter, she has become dimly conscious that there will be no peace at Glinn unless Maude yields assent to the ukase Harold Denison has promulgated. Women of her class can suffer, but they cannot resist. Even now she would not urge Maude to marry Pearman. But that her impecunious nephew had dared to entangle her daughter in an engagement, especially at this time, roused as much wrath within her as her nature was capable of. Most mothers, I imagine, would deem she had righteous grounds for indignation.

Bitterly did Maude regret she had made a *confidante* of her mother. Sadly did she ponder over having to write that letter to Gren. She decided, at all events, she would not do it that day, so wrote him a rather tearful, but very sweet little note instead. Time enough to pen the other, she thought, if mother insists upon it, to-morrow. The girl was

growing very earnest in her love, and, even if she had to tell her cousin that their engagement must be broken off, intended to let him know that she only meant for the present.

But all this while Pearman has not been idle. Slowly, but surely, the legal notices and proceedings progress, and Harold Denison knows full well that within three weeks ten thousand pounds must be found, or Glinn must go to the hammer. The Pearmans conduct the campaign with scrupulous politeness. It is quite in accordance with the old traditions of the Battle of Fontenoy. They apologise for every fresh process, and allude to it as a mere matter of form. They affect to believe that there can be no doubt Mr. Denison will easily pay them off at the expiration of the notice of foreclosure. The old gentleman even indulges in jocularities on the subject.

"Mean to have the very last day out of us, I see, sir ; and quite right too," he chuckled, upon meeting the squire one day.

"Yes, Pearman," was the grim retort ; "I learnt the exacting of my pound of flesh, to the last penny-weight, in your hands. I have not forgot my lesson. You burn it into your pupils' minds pretty deeply."

The old lawyer has laid himself open to another

rebuff, and Denison has not failed to take advantage thereof. Why? Sarcasm breaks no bones, few knew better than that astute "fisher of men." His sensitiveness was tolerably blunt, and he recked little what men said to him, or of him, so long as the furtherance of the object he had in view was attained. That his son should marry Maude Denison was the goal he now aimed at, and that that was to be brought about, he still thought far from improbable. To that end he conceived, even while pressing him for money, it was quite necessary to keep on easy terms with the squire. None knew better than he how bitter it is for a proud man to take his words back, and if what he now played for was to be achieved, that was a necessity. The task must be made as easy as possible—the unpalatable draught sugared as far as might be.

"He—he!" he answered; "you will have your joke, Mr. Denison. It's a mighty pity you couldn't make up your mind to concentrate the property once more. Beg pardon, Squire," he continued, deprecating Denison's angry gesture; "don't fear my alluding to it again. It was presumption on my part, I know, and if I said anything to vex you, I'm sure I'm heartily sorry. You'll forgive an old man, who, not having been brought up with your views, saw nothing but the concentration of an estate.

Yes, I know I was all in the wrong; it isn't likely Miss Maude could be brought to think of such a thing. I'm sure I hope the calling-in of the mortgage is no inconvenience; you can easily raise it elsewhere. But Sam's got so deep in the racing now, that we must get that sum together before the Two Thousand. I wish he wasn't; but he's clever, Sam is—clever in his way—too great a gentleman for me. No offence, sir, I hope; but I'm a plain man."

Harold Denison touched his hat haughtily, and rode home; but the old usurer's artful speech still simmered in his brain. Why should it not be? It would cut the tangled knot of his difficulties. He had made inquiries. Young Pearman had been brought up a gentleman, and visited in several good houses in the county. He naturally a little exaggerated this to himself, to justify the course he intended to pursue; nay, for the matter of that, had been pursuing for some days. His wife had told him that she had laid the Pearman proposition before Maude, and that the young lady had declined, with thanks; since which intelligence he had bullied Mrs. Denison, and snubbed or treated his daughter with cold indifference. The heads of the family can make contumacious children conscious of their high displeasure without any unseemly rating—

indeed, that may be looked upon as mere mild and salutary punishment compared to the other—that other which, to speak metaphorically, consists in being condemned to the domestic ice-house. It is hard to describe, still there will be few of my readers who, if they have had the good fortune not to experience it, but must have seen some culprit enduring that slow punishment—meted out more often, perhaps, to daughters than sons. But don't we all know it: the chilling rejoinder that meets any attempt at geniality—the austere look that seems to say it is heresy that we should presume to forget the measure of our offending—the moral thong always awaiting us should we show any signs of relapsing into cheerfulness? Bah! those physical torturers of the middle ages were mere bunglers at their craft.

From this time poor Maude's life was made heavy to bear. Harold Denison sent for her to his study, and himself put Pearman's proposal before her. He enlarged upon its advantages, and declared that it was her duty to save the property to her descendants; on her head it rested whether the Denisons of Glinn should cease to exist, as of course her future husband must take her name. For himself, he cared not—he was an old man, and it mattered little to him. Any foreign watering-place was good enough for

him to wear out his miserable life in. He deplored the follies of his youth. It was sad that a father should plead before a daughter in this wise. He could bear anything but the thought that the Denisons of Glinn should be expunged from the roll of the county in which they had dwelt and been known since the Wars of the Roses; all this it was in Maude's power to avert. Why could she not marry this man? He had been brought up a gentleman, and mixed in the best society in the county. If not quite her equal in blood, he would repair the shattered fortunes of the family. Such matches were made every day. The destiny of the plutocracy was to strengthen the aristocracy. Far be it from him to put any pressure upon her, but it was his duty as a parent to lay the whole case before her.

Gallantly did Maude fight her battle, and though at the end of this long interview she stood with flushed and tear-stained cheeks to listen to her father's final exordium, she was still resolute in her refusal.

But the struggle was too unequal. Under the pressure put upon her by her husband, Mrs. Denison had not only made Maude write a letter of renunciation to Grenville Rose, but had penned him a very severe philippic herself, in which she insisted that

all correspondence should cease between them. She had further, under the threat of revealing everything to Mr. Denison, extorted a promise from Maude that she would write no more to her cousin. She knew her daughter well, and felt implicit confidence that, her word once pledged, truth would be kept.

I have described the first stage of the attack. It is a common enough story, as many a woman could bear witness to, as far as the general details go. Can you not easily guess the result? She was a high-spirited girl, and bore herself bravely in the beginning; but cut off from all communication with her lover, she gave way at last to the moral pressure brought to bear upon her, and, with pale cheeks and heavy eyes, whispered her mother "that they might do with her as they liked; if she couldn't marry Gren, she didn't care who it was."

And that weak mother, who, under her husband's influence, had for the last week done all she could to abet the sale of the daughter she loved so, wept bitterly now her end was accomplished.

Yes, they had worn her down as last—

"Non vi sed saepe cadendo."

"Don't cry, mother," said Maude, gently; "I will do all you wish. I would rather not know

more about it than I am obliged to just yet. And one thing more. I must—when all's settled, you know; there can be no harm then—I must just write to bid Gren good-bye; you'll let me do that, mother, won't you?"

It was all over. The bright Maude of some few weeks back, with her high spirits and ringing laugh, was scarcely to be recognised in the pale spiritless girl who moped about the house now. Hearts don't break nowadays; but when young ladies dispose of their affections injudiciously, the intervention of the authorities is wont to be followed by a short interval of sorrow and sadness.

Harold Denison, upon hearing his daughter's decision, made a mighty gulp, and, swallowing as much pride as might have set up two or three county families, penned a letter to lawyer Pearman.

It was an awkward epistle to compose, but the squire showed himself quite equal to the occasion. The sum of it was this:—He first apologised, in a haughty manner, for what he was pleased to term his curtness at their last interview. In the encumbered state of his property he had thought it but right to lay the proposal before Miss Denison, who, it appeared, took a different and perhaps more sensible view of it than she had done in the first instance. He should, therefore, be happy to

welcome the visits of Mr. Pearman, junior, to Glinn; and it must then, of course, depend upon how he did his *devoir* in Miss Denison's eyes, as to whether Glinn should be once more consolidated.

"Told you so, Sam—told you so," said old Pearman, when he received this precious epistle. "He only wanted time and line enough. I've done my part, boy. It is in your hands now; but I think you'll find it all pretty smooth sailing."





CHAPTER VIII.

A TRAINING-GROUND AT DAYBREAK.

A LITTLE after six in the morning. The April sun has just succeeded in breaking through the morning mist, and the air still has a crackle of frost in it. At the foot of a small knoll, surmounted by a little clump of Scotch fir, stand three men, engaged in earnest conversation. Carefully sheeted, with imps of stable-boys on their backs, some seven or eight thoroughbreds pace majestically round and round the little hillock. On the side these men are standing, stretches a considerable expanse of velvety turf-down. A series of slender white poles mark out a wide oval road, somewhere about a mile in circumference. The centre of this oval is interspersed with furze-bushes and a few scattered and

stunted thorns. That broad, green, ribbon-like track is what is termed the Mannersley Gallop, and the ground upon which Mr. Pearman's horses take their daily exercise. The dash of hoar-frost melts rapidly before the hot yet fitful gleams of the sun-god, and the soft herbage sparkles with glittering dewdrops.

The gentleman in the pepper-and-salt suit, single-breasted coat, longish waistcoat, and low-crowned hat, is Martin Pycroft, trainer. He fiddles with the ash-plant in his hand, and seems rather to demur to something that his companion—whom, though enveloped in a loose overcoat, on account of the chilliness of the morning, we have no difficulty in recognising as Sam Pearman—seems to insist on.

As for the third member of the conference, a slight, wiry, dark little man, he confines himself to sucking the top of a straight-cutting whip, and looks as if his opinion must be asked pretty decidedly before he intends committing himself on any point. He is a jockey of some considerable eminence in his profession, and judging from his abstracted look, apparently giving his whole attention to something taking place a few hundred miles off.

"Can't do any harm, Martin. He might just as well have a spin with the old horse as go his usual gallop."

"Well, I'd rather Mr. Pearman wait till he is quite wound up before trying him. You must do as you please, sir. No horse can be doing better; but continually trying does take the heart out of them, you know, sir."

"Of course it does; but mind, we haven't galloped Coriander beside another this year. We suppose him to be quite as good and better than he was last autumn, but we've never ascertained. I mean to know this morning. See, I've brought the saddle-cloths down with me;" and he touched a small carpet-bag that lay at his feet with his stick. "What do you think, Jim?" and he turned to the jockey.

"I, Mr. Pearman?—I never thinks till I gets my orders, and then I do my best to ride to 'em. Wish some people 'd think a little before they gives 'em. Why, here's Martin t'other day at Northampton puts me up on that Jeremy Diddler, and tells me to make a pace. Why the colt can't go quicker than a rocking-horse. If I ever did think I should get a-wondering what you keeps that brute for."

"Never mind!" laughed Pearman; "you shall be on something a little better before three weeks are over. I've made up my mind, Martin, so it's no use talking. Let the others strip and begin their

work. Coriander and old Loadstone can walk about till they've done, and then we'll see what they can make of each other over three-quarters of a mile."

Mr. Pycroft knew his employers too well to argue further. Father and son were alike on that point. They would always listen patiently and attentively to all he had to say, and, moreover, give it due consideration; but they decided for themselves. They were not amateurs, the Pearmans, who trusted implicitly to their trainer; they attended (or rather, I should now say, Sam did) pretty closely to their business. He was at the foot of the knoll quite three mornings a week, and was a very good judge when there of how his horses looked and went. Mr. Pycroft was too well looked after and too well treated when successful, to have much disposition to play his employers false. Moreover, the old man had established a reputation of being dangerous to play tricks upon. There was more than one story going of the grief that had attended minor turf satellites who had seized the opportunity of making a little money out of the old lawyer. It was successful at the time, but somehow the turning of the tables had come with startling rapidity, and the relentlessness which the old gentleman had ever displayed in the return-match had made people a little shy of interfering with him. In short, the

Pearmans, amongst the regular ring and turf *habitués*, were looked upon as men rather too dangerous to be meddled with in any other than a legitimate manner.

In the meantime the string has halted, the sheets are removed, and then, led by the head lad on a veteran of four seasons' standing, the youngsters proceed in Indian file round the course at a half-speed gallop. Then comes more walking for twenty minutes or so, succeeded by another steady canter, towards the finish of which the pace is considerably improved—the rate of progression being always regulated by the rider of the leading horse, who has, of course, received his instructions from the trainer beforehand. More walking, then more cantering, at the conclusion of which Martin Pycroft says quietly,—

“Take 'em home, William, and tell those boys to bring Loadstone and Coriander up here.”

Merely replying “All right, sir,” William turned his horse's head in the direction of the stables.

A minute or two, and a couple of imps of stable-boys walk the horses to where Pearman, Pycroft, and “the rigid rider to orders” are standing.

“Jump off and strip 'em,” says the trainer. The boys slip off the backs of their respective mounts, and hold them by the head while Pycroft unlooses

Coriander's surcingle, whips off the sheets with a dexterous hand, and proceeds to adjust a light racing-saddle on that equine celebrity's back. Jim, assisted by Pearman, performs the same office for Loadstone. A few minutes, and the horses, their coats looking like burnished satin, stand ready for their morning's work.

"Now, sir," says Martin, "before we see how they are together, we had better just let 'em have a quiet canter. Jim, you get up on Coriander.—You, young un," he continued, addressing the lad who had been upon Loadstone, "get on your own horse, and lead round a nice strong canter, making it a little quicker from the bush home than in the dip; but no galloping in earnest, mind."

"Looks and moves well, sir, don't he?" said Martin, as Coriander, under Jim's masterly hands, after two or three angry snatches at his bit, settled down into the long low sweeping stride characteristic of the most thoroughbred horses that distinguish themselves on a racecourse. I say most, for there are exceptions—horses that get over the ground in a manner of their own that deceive the best judge often puzzle you, as they come in first, to know how they ever got there with that clumsy, fighting, or whatnot action. As with some men, so you must simply regard what they have done, and not

look into how they did it. Like ourselves, they do good work in all shapes. Some of our greatest heroes have been far from the feminine standard of masculine beauty.

And now the pair come striding along towards the knoll, where they are pulled up.

“Go kind?” inquires Mr. Pycroft.

“Nice ’oss to ride—can put him anywhere,” observes Jim, sententiously.

“Walk ’em about a bit, while we get the saddle-cloths ready;” and Martin commenced rummaging in the carpet bag before mentioned.

Let us for one second look at the first favourite for the Two Thousand—Coriander, by Sweetmeat, out of Gapeseed: a grand dark chesnut, about fifteen-three, with a pair of white heels; a little slack-loined, perhaps, and rather light below the knee, but not one you can pick many faults in. He has a beautiful clean head, with a bold steady eye that says volumes for his courage and temper. A judge of a horse would pronounce him to be honest, every bit of him. He may be beaten, but he will try all he can. Those slack loins may bring him to grief up a severe hill; but though not quite the thing, he is not so deficient there that it ought to go much against him. His companion, Loadstone, is an iron-grey four-year old, a good

deal plainer to look at on the first glance, but full of good points when you come to pick him to pieces. His great thighs and quarters would alone command him a certain amount of respect. He has, moreover, what is termed a wear-and-tear look about him that always delights a connoisseur. He has won three or four pretty good handicaps cleverly, and the Pearmans rather flatter themselves that neither the handicappers nor the public as yet know quite how good he is.

“Now, sir, what’s it to be?” inquires Mr. Pycroft, who is busy slipping long and short bits of lead into the pockets of the saddle-cloths. These pieces are all stamped, and weigh 2 lbs., 3 lbs., 1 lb., and $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., as the case may be. “I should think if Loadstone gives him 10 lbs., and he makes a good race of it, that will be near enough for the present.”

“Not quite. I believe he can beat the old horse at evens, but it will be good enough to-day if he can do it at 6 lbs.,” replied Pearman. “Did you weigh Jim and that boy Allen before you came out?”

“I weighed the boy, and I have leaded his saddle-cloth to make him up to 8 st. 10 lbs. Jim says he weighs 8 st., but I’ve had the scales brought out. You weigh ’em, Mr. Pearman, while I mind

the horses, and we'll adjust the saddle-cloths afterwards."

Jim and the boy were now called up, and duly got into the scale. Another muttered conversation between Pycroft and his master; then the saddles were removed, the leaded cloths carefully adjusted, the saddles replaced over them, the long surcingles passed carefully over, and Coriander and Loadstone were ready for their trial.

"Give them their orders, Martin, and then come here and see it. Mind, they're to start from the three-quarter-of-a-mile post. By Jove, though, who's to start 'em?"

"All right, sir; I told William to come back, and here he is. You go down with 'em, Will. Bush in, mind. Here, Jim, you ride the old horse, of course, this time. Get off, and come right along. I don't mean ride his head off, but take the lead, and keep it."

"All right!" And Jim walked the grey leisurely down alongside William, to the starting-post.

"Now, look here, boy," said Mr. Pycroft, advancing to the stripling who was on Coriander; "you have an idea of riding, you have. Now, don't go and make an exhibition of yourself this morning. Mind, if you do it here, I shall take care you don't get much chance of doing it in public. Attend to

what I say to you. Get off as well as you can. Jim's pretty safe to do you there; but, even if he don't, mind, you're to wait on him till you come to the quarter-mile post from home. You know it. Run up to him then. But, whatever Jim does, whether he begins riding or whether he doesn't, you're not to begin in earnest till within fifty yards of home. I'll forgive you if you wait too long, and lose it that way; but if you come too soon and ride him to a standstill, we shan't want you for light-weights at Newmarket or anywhere else."

The lad walked his horse after Loadstone with a very serious face. Like all boys in a racing-stable, of course the height of his ambition was to become a jockey. He was not a little proud of being in charge of such a celebrity as Coriander. For, be it known to the uninitiated that every race-horse in a big stable is looked after by his own boy, and that these boys, when their horse is one of distinction, are immensely proud of him. They groom him, ride him at exercise—in short, almost live with him. Coriander was the first crack that had fallen to young Allen's care, and he firmly believed such a flyer never existed. Now—anxious moment!—he was to ride him in his trial. He looked even at that as a great rise in his profession. It is true he had ridden in two or three trials

before, but then he had generally been on something that had had no earthly chance to win. Suppose he should make a mess of it this morning ; Mr. Pycroft would never give him another chance, perhaps.

No wonder the boy looks rather serious. But they are at the post. A couple of false starts take place, in consequence of young Allen's eagerness to get well off.

"Stop a bit, young 'un," said Jim, laughing ; "be a little steady. Mind, it ain't a race, and I don't want to get the best of you. I only want to get away fair. Lor', how a starter would walk down your throat if you carried on like this !"

The remonstrance had the desired effect, and the next time they were away, Jim having a little the best of it, though not much. Once off, the boy's nerves steadied directly. He waited patiently till he came to the quarter-post, and then ran up abreast of Loadstone. Locked together, they went for the next two hundred yards, and then Jim began what is termed in racing parlance "fiddling" at his horse : it means riding him a little. He drew near a length ahead, but the boy sat still. "Wait till within fifty yards of home, whatever Jim does," he muttered, "and I will, if I'm beat for it."

A few strides more, and he saw that Loadstone

could hardly hold the lead he had obtained. Gradually he was creeping up to him again, though still quiet on his horse. A little more, and Jim began to ride his horse in earnest, and this was the hardest trial the boy had undergone yet. For a moment Jim forged ahead, and looked like leaving him altogether; then he seemed to hang; and now surely he was within fifty yards of home. Was he? Yes! He sat down and shook up Coriander, passed Jim easily, and went past the knoll a couple of lengths in front.

“You’ll do, young ’un,” said Jim, good-naturedly, as they pulled up their horses. “Don’t quite know what orders you got, but can pretty well guess. You stick as close to what you’re told to do, and keep your head as cool as you did this time, and you’ll find yourself first past the post at Epsom some of these days.”

There is a fierce rush of triumph through the system when we make our first great score at anything—cricket, literature, politics, the drama, the bar, what you will: that sense of being, for the moment, a man of mark in your avocation; the feeling of having, for the time being, brought down the gallery of this cynical world we live in. But I should fancy that the public schoolboy making his first great score at Lord’s, and the youthful jockey

winning his first great race, perhaps taste the mad intoxication of success as much as anybody. Excepting, perhaps, on the stage, such triumphs come to us later in life. They are sweet then, but we can't exult over them as we do in those days when everything looks so bright and sunshiny. We have modest misgivings as to whether, perhaps, we have not done our best. We know all about "going up like the rocket, coming down like the stick." We can put our hands on so many brilliant failures. "Written himself out, sir?" "Ah! you should have seen him at his best!" "If you could have heard him a few years ago! he was worth listening to then!" Our best speakers, writers, actors, &c., all suffer in their turn, from this. You are always tried by your highest standard. All men culminate at some time, but it is often before their work is done. Moreover, bread-and-cheese has still to be earned.

"Well, Martin, I think that'll about do," laughed Pearman, as the trial finished. "It will be a good horse that has the best of Coriander three weeks from this."

"Yes, sir; he's better even than I thought he was, and I know I haven't worked him up to his best yet. I've no fear of his not going on well, for I never trained a better-constituted colt in my

life ; and though we didn't try him quite the full distance this morning, I've no doubt of his getting the Rowley Mile as well as he's done his three-quarters this morning."

"You did that very well, my lad," he continued, addressing Allen. "This morning's ride will be a little in your pocket, if we've luck, and you pay attention to my next orders ; and they are—Hold your tongue. You'll get riding before you're many months older. Well, Jim, what do you think?"

The jockey jumped off his horse, and handed him over to the boy that had first been on him. When out of earshot, he replied, "I'll win the Guineas, bar accidents, unless there's a great three-year-old whose name we haven't heard on."

Sam Pearman, in the meantime, seated on the soft grass, was busily glancing over a neat memorandum-book. "Yes," he muttered, "stakes and all, it will be a goodish bit to win. It's a bigger thing than I ever pulled off yet, and I have had some very tidy wins in my time. We'll be off home now, Martin—eh? Good enough, Jim, isn't it?"

"Wish I'd your book on it, sir," was that worthy's reply.

"Well, you and Martin will find that I've not

forgotten to do something in that way for you when it's landed," laughed Pearman. "For the present, good-bye."

"Must win—eh?" said the trainer.

"Can't lose," responded the jockey, "unless I'm knocked over."





CHAPTER IX.

THE BETROTHAL.

LD PEARMAN had shown perfect knowledge of mankind on the receipt of Denison's letter. He had gone over to Glinn the next morning. The squire had rather—no other word expresses it so well—funked the interview. But the old lawyer was quite master of the situation. Though such marriages took place every day, he could quite understand a man of Mr. Denison's position not liking the idea of it at first. The toilers of this world, who had to make their way, must always be prepared for these rebuffs. It was part of their education, a species of purifying that was good for them in the acquirement of each social step they might achieve. Of course the decision still lay

entirely in Miss Denison's hands ; and really, if the foreclosure of that mortgage was the slightest inconvenience to Mr. Denison, he was truly sorry that, in his ignorance of Mr. Denison's affairs, he should have occasioned the least uneasiness to an old and valued client. All those proceedings would, of course, be at once done away with, and things could remain as they were at present, whether Sam and Miss Denison made a match of it or not.

That he was talking the veriest balderdash, the wily old attorney was quite aware of. That the squire was, of course, equally cognisant of it, this "fisher of men" knew well. But he also felt it was a *sine quâ non* that Mr. Denison's descent from his stilts must be made as easy as possible ; that the genuine fact of the mortgage being cancelled, or left for ever in abeyance conditionally on Miss Denison marrying his son, must be delicately veiled. *Dorer la pilule* was an art Pearman had devoted a good deal of time to. That an honest rough tonic was wholesomer a good many of his clients could have testified.

The squire felt quite grateful to his visitor for the tact and delicacy with which he paved the way for his retreat from an awkward position. It was, perhaps, this wonderful quality which had helped Pearman on in the world more than anything.

Even those who had been most closely shorn were always impressed to their dying day that, if they could have been pulled through the swamp of impecuniosity their recklessness had plunged them into, Pearman would have done it. These poor innocents, in their nakedness, still baa'd the praises of the wolf in sheep's clothing who had assisted at their shearing.

Denison was no fool where his interests were concerned. He had, it is true, been guilty of the grossest folly in squandering a fine property ; but he was not weak enough to look upon the lawyer as a benefactor.

" Well, Mr. Pearman," he replied to the latter's exordium, " we had best let bygones be bygones. If I was sharp upon you the other day in speech, you retaliated on the mortgage ; and, 'gad ! you had the best of it. Come in and lunch."

So the old gentleman lunched at Glinn, and was introduced to Mrs. Denison and his future daughter-in-law. Maude took but little notice of him ; but her mother, having now made up her mind to the match, was favourably impressed. Mr. Pearman, in fact, dressed quite as the old respectable confidential solicitor, and acted the part extremely well. Poor Mrs. Denison, having made up her mind to meet her ideal of a low turf attorney, derived

principally from novels, was most agreeably astonished.

That the son would quickly follow in his father's footsteps was a matter of course; and here again the Glinn family were destined to be pleasantly surprised. Sam Pearman, though he had not all, yet inherited a fair proportion of his father's tact. The old gentleman, too, had given him one or two valuable hints and a most thorough *carte du pays*. He presented himself very quietly, was very subdued and respectful—the least thing *impressé*, but by no means demonstrative in his attentions to Maude; talked just a shade of racing, to gratify the squire, letting it drop as quickly as opportunity served; chatted pleasantly on all the topics of the day, and took his departure after the delivery of a neat anecdote that made even Mrs. Denison smile.

Poor Maude, she had sat very *triste* and pale through the visit; but even she felt a species of mild gratitude for the little her accredited suitor had sought from her on this occasion. She felt—what I presume most girls would under similar circumstances—that she could marry the man to save Glinn to her parents, but that any lovemaking beforehand would be unendurable. If he would continue to treat her with quiet courtesy, she could

bear it: but to yield her lips to him, she felt was beyond her. That lovers claim such favours she knew; but the girl had a strong touch of romance in her (absurd, if you like, in these days), and vowed no kiss should be laid on her cheek until she was irrevocably severed from Grenville Rose. She still clung to an undefined hope that he might rescue her yet, and that her lips should meet his unpoluted. Poor child! her case looks sad enough now; but there are a good many fitful changes in this world's great kaleidoscope. Men cut their throats prematurely, and humanity generally declines struggling, just as better times are about to dawn. "More judicious to play the game out than throw down the cards," holds good in life as well as at whist.

That afternoon Maude strolled out into the grounds. She wandered up one of the grassy vistas through the sea of laurels, until she arrived at a pond—a pond all covered with great large-leaved water-lilies; and by the edge of that pond Maude sat down, and, resting her head on her hand, began to think. It was one of those warm sunshiny days we are occasionally blessed with in April. She thought very sadly of the life before her. Of course it was her duty to save Glinn to her parents. Why was duty always made so hard in this world? Ah! it

was cruel of Gren to tell her he loved her just when they were to separate for ever.

Disporting in that pond was a duck, a prosaic bird enough, and I don't know that the young and numerous family of ducklings by which she was attended made her one whit more interesting. But the most commonplace people stand out from the crowd when either tragedy or heroism become incorporated with the web of their lives. As Maude gazed listlessly at the brood, her attention became arrested by the sudden anxiety of the mother: she flapped her wings—she “quack-quacked” with a shrillness and emphasis unusual in her race. Her children attended rapidly to her warning—all save one. Ducks, like human mothers, are afflicted with their *bête noirs*. And then Maude saw swimming rapidly from the bank, with grinning teeth and fierce red eyes, a big brown water-rat, who had evidently marked that wild young duckling for his prey. Unaware of the sharks that lie in wait for adventurous youth, he was dipping his head under water, gobbling some particularly fine weed, and giving vent to jubilant duck-sounds as he turned up his very imperfect tail in his somersets. The rat had carefully swam round his destined prey, so as to cut him off from his family. His wicked eyes gleamed fell and fierce as he neared his unconscious

victim. At this moment the mother rushed across the pond, one part swimming, three flying, as we have all often seen ducks do. But ere she reached it, the rat had disappeared. Maude sprang to her feet; she knew well what that meant, and that that reckless duckling would be seized from below. Some dead sticks lay ready to her hand, and she flung them furiously in the direction of the duckling. Their splashing and the efforts of the mother were crowned with success, and Maude caught but one more glimpse of the baffled water-pirate's brown back, as he made for the bank, discomfited.

And then Maude once more sat down, rejoicing in the escape of that scapegrace duckling. Her hat had fallen off in the excitement of the scrimmage, and the glossy brown tresses were in wild confusion, and, leaning her cheek on her pretty white hand, she fell asleep—as fair a dryad as ever was gazed upon. Maude not only slept—she dreamt; and she pictured to herself that she was drowning in some big lake: she was going down—down ever so far, and suddenly she clasped a spar of some kind, and felt that she was saved. Then a big brown man with fierce red eyes threatened her and struck at her, and just as she was about to let go, the big brown man suddenly vanished, and Grenville Rose stood in his place, caught her by the hand, and drew

her to him. She fell into his arms; and as he bent over her and kissed her, his lips were cold as those of a corpse, and with a half-cry she awoke only to find her pet Dan, most sagacious of setters, rubbing his black nose against her face.

Maude sat up, and turned over her dream in her mind. It cheered her. She accepted it as a sort of *sortilège*, and thought it foretold the triumph of Gren over Pearman, and everything all light and sunshine for the future. The clay-cold lips of her lover seemed an awkward point to get over, but she attributed them rightly to Dan's cold and healthy nose. Dreams I hold to be but the reflex of our waking thoughts. The scene on the pond she witnessed just before she fell asleep, conjoined to her relations with Grenville Rose and Pearman, easily accounted for her vision. As for *sortilège*, do not think there are no believers in it in the present day. We all sneer at it, but many of us put trust in auguries in our secret souls as implicitly as did those old pagans in the centuries so long rolled by. Gamblers are notorious in this way. Many a man, from some auspicious circumstance in the early morning, has predicated, "I'm in luck to-day"—the speculator on his way to the Stock Exchange, the farmer on his way to market, though the bucolic mind is not imaginative. Did not that half-crazed

genius, Rousseau, throw stones at a big tree, from a short distance, to see if he should ultimately be among the elect people of heaven?

But Sam Pearman, in the meanwhile, loses no time in prosecuting his suit. Diffidence is not one of his failings, and in such mock courtship as this there is little fear of the result. Before a week had gone by he was formally engaged to Maude Denison, and the discussion of when the wedding shall take place is pre-eminent between the high contracting parties. Maude listens, and assents to everything in a quiet listless way. She treats her betrothed with calm courtesy, but avoids all occasion of being left alone with him. She shows tact upon this point that would seem past comprehension to one who was unaware that her mother was her pledged aider and abettor in the prevention of a *tête-à-tête*. So far, Sam Pearman can boast of receiving but scant favours from the hands of his bride elect. Her cheek is as yet innocent of his caresses, and a warm pressure of the hand the extent of his achievements.

No news—not a sign of Grenville Rose; and wearily Maude commenced going through all the ordeal of preparing the trousseau. They were to be married the first week in May.

But one morning a groom came over in hot haste

from Mannersley with a few lines for the squire from Sam Pearman, to say that his father was dead. The son had told them a day or two before that the old man was ailing, but had had no idea that there was much the matter. Three or four days' illness, then inflammation set in, and old lawyer Pearman was gone to his rest. That ancient fisher would never angle more, and Samuel, his son, reigned in his stead.

"Put off the wedding, Nell, for a month or two, of course," said the squire, as he broke the news to his wife. "Otherwise it's perhaps for the best. I can't pretend to feel any intense grief about old Pearman, and his departure leaves Sam and Maude all free to enter upon Mannersley at once."

Mrs. Denison showed a wisdom on the occasion seldom evinced. She said nothing, for the simple reason she had nothing to say.

As for Sam Pearman, he bore his bereavement with tolerable composure.

"Sorry for the old father," he muttered. "He was a clever man, every bit of him. He could play with these swells, and manage 'em in a way nobody else I ever saw could. He was very good to me, too, always. I shall never have the head he had if I live a hundred years. Lucky I don't want it."

Then he fell into a brown study. "Yes, put my marriage off a bit—hum! By Jove! how lucky Coriander is entered in my name for the Two Thousand, and not his. Fancy his being disqualified, after the trial of last week!"





CHAPTER X.

GLEAMS OF LIGHT.

GRENVILLE ROSE, to speak metaphorically, has been paddling his skiff through troubled waters of late. Maude's short wobegone little note of dismissal, and his aunt's indignant letter, were far from pleasant reading to a man as much entangled as he was in the love-god's meshes. He sat and sulked—he sat and smoked—he sat and thought—he sat and drank; but none of the four processes seemed at all consolatory. They all ended in the same conclusion, that "that thrice-begotten beast Pearman would marry his darling Maude, and that he was, and ever should be, utterly miserable." It is his language, if you please, and not mine; but they will speak irrationally, and with vehemence, when they are in that state.

Anathematizing, with an impartiality quite beautiful to witness, everything and everybody, Mr. Rose once more enters his sitting-room in pursuit of breakfast. With a "Pish!" at his letters—I am afraid the actual expression was stronger, though that will do for this narrative—he, as on the previous occasion, unfolds the *Times*. Again, as a preliminary, does he ascertain the extreme firmness of Coriander in the betting quotations for the Two Thousand. Not that Silky Dallison's feed at Greenwich is any object to him now—he is too miserable to enter into such things; but he might as well read about that as anything else. Why does the supplement, which he never dreams of looking at, tumble so persistently across his plate?

"Let's have a look at the second column," he mutters, "and see whether 'X Y Z's' family are still in tribulation about his absence; or whether 'Pollaky' is offering his usual hundred for an absconded young lady, aged nineteen, good-looking, and with a rose in her bonnet—last seen, &c. 'Births'—hum! don't see much good in them. There once myself, I suppose: nice unlucky beggar's advent to put in the papers. 'Marriages!'—d—n 'em! Suppose I shall see hers before many weeks are over. 'Deaths!'—I feel that's more in my line just now. I hope there's a good lot of 'em.

How I should like to add one or two to the column—more particularly one. Holloa! what's this? 'At Mannersley, after a very few days' illness, in the seventy-second year of his age, Samuel Pearman, Esq.' Wish to Heavens it had been his son!" muttered Grenville; and then he sat down to think whether this could by any possibility, influence his prospects in any way.

You must remember that "his prospects," in Rose's mind, at this time were circumscribed to the relation he and his cousin stood in.

It is hard to believe that there is no such thing as destiny. It is almost ludicrous at times to think what a trivial incident has turned the whole current of our lives. There is a large and well-known speculator on the turf at this time—a man, doubtless, worth many ingots and much stock and security,—whose money-making career dates from the presentation of a case of razors, according to popular report. Who can say? Many such an instance might be quoted. Grenville Rose's life turned on reading the supplement of the *Times*, it may be said by accident, that particular morning.

I fancy no human being ever saw that generally light-hearted barrister thinking so hard as he was upon this occasion. He has won many a good cause since, but often laughs and says, "that was

the biggest he was ever engaged in; and no solicitor to draw up the brief, mind."

"By Jove!" he said at last, "I can almost swear I saw it. I recollect laughing over it at the time, and thinking what a quaint, queer old deed it was. Suppose I'm right—I wonder how it would affect things? I must go over and talk to Dallison a bit."

And while Grenville Rose crosses the Temple Gardens, let me say a few words about George Dallison. He comes athwart the loves of Grenville and Maude but for a few days. Yet he is destined to be the master of the situation, the *Deus ex machina* of that eventful period. George Dallison is a barrister some two or three years senior to Rose. He has a fair income of his own, and instead of plunging into "Coke on Lyttleton," as his friends fondly hoped, has betaken himself to the elucidation of the mysteries of the turf. Rather below the middle height, with large liquid hazel eyes, a slight almost effeminate figure, feet and hands that would be no disgrace to a woman, and a soft *trainante* voice, nothing could be more deceptive in appearance than Silky Dallison. His low languid tones and caressing manner had earned him that *sobriquet* at college. It had stuck to him ever since. Destitute of whisker, a slight soft brown moustache just

shading his upper lip ; lithe, supple, almost girlish in appearance—such was George Dallison. Yet his head could see him triumphantly through the heaviest “college wine ;” few men of his age rode straighter and steadier (they don’t always go together) over a country than he ; while Tattersall’s had arrived at the conclusion that, though he might look young, nobody threw his money away much less than Silky Dallison. When, in his languid manner, he was willing to take a thousand to thirty about any horse’s chance, it had a chance—a good deal more than, as a rule, can be predicated of the animals about which such very long odds are to be obtained.

“Come in,” was the response to Rose’s sharp knock, and Dallison was discovered placidly consuming a cigar and a French novel in the easiest of armchairs. No greater sybarite perhaps ever existed ; yet on Newmarket Heath, he would wait the day through wind and sleet, to back the “good thing,” he had journeyed from London expressly for, and return to town without a murmur, if such had turned out the delusive phantom too usual on such occasions.

“Oh, Grenville, charmed to see you ! Take a chair and a weed, and talk. It’s not a bad novel,” he observed, as he threw the yellow-coloured volume on the table ; but I’ve had more than enough of it,

and myself for the present, News! Ah, Gren, if you have any, unfold thy short, and, I trust, moving tale."

"Thanks—I'll take a baccy; and now I want to talk to you a bit on business—reason I'm here," said Rose, as he lit his cigar.

"I say, confound it all! what the devil did you come to me for? All bosh. I don't understand your business—suppose I ought to say ours—an atom; better go on to Childers after you have had a smoke. Next staircase, you know."

"Shouldn't come to you on a point of law, 'Silky,' but this happens to be a bit of racing."

"You racing! What do you mean?"

"Have you seen old Pearman's death in the paper?"

"Lord, yes," rejoined Dallison, once more relapsing into his usual manner. "You're thinking of Coriander;—makes no difference, you know—horse entered in the son's name."

"Suppose, Silky, I could show you that that horse couldn't start without my consent, or something like it?"

"Come, old fellow, no gammon. I'm on him for the Derby, and am only waiting to hedge my money till he's won the Two Thousand."

"Look here, Dallison; I know nothing about the

turf, and have come to you to manage a great game between young Pearman and myself. Will you do so? Of course you can take care of yourself in the transaction. I can tell you nothing for certain as yet. Will you manage the turf part of the business while I work the legal machinery? As my idea of the case stands at present, I tell you fairly, I think Coriander's starting for the Guineas will be at the option of myself and clients; but I may be mistaken."

"The devil! Do you advise me to hedge now, then?" said Silky Dallison.

"Certainly not. I know nothing about the turf, but if I am right in my conjecture, the management of Coriander in the market will be, for the benefit of my clients, in your hands before a few days are over. Will you say nothing till I see you again, and give you, as I hope, the reasons why?"

"Dumb as tombstones, and reticent as Madame Tussaud's Exhibition," quoth Dallison. "But look here, old fellow. Racing is business with me; if you're not in for a regular mare's-nest, there's a heap of money to be made out of this. You say I'm to be your agent if it is as you think it. I'll ask no questions; but as you know nothing about that great elaborate system of gambling, yclept racing—if, as you think, you've any control over Coriander,

don't whisper it to your carpet bag till you've seen me again. I say this honestly, with a view to doing my best for you. Bring me your case when you've worked it out, and I'll tell you what to do?"

"Many thanks, old fellow! I'm off to Hampshire to-night. I shall be back the day after to-morrow, though perhaps late. It will be all decided then. I'm playing for a good deal bigger stake than you, Silky—the girl I love, and something to start housekeeping on."

"Ah," returned Dallison, I like that; d—n the second part; if you've got the first stake on, you're playing in earnest. I am still all in the dark; but if you see your way to winning the first, I'll bet you two to one, knowing nothing about it, I win enough for you to start housekeeping on."

That very night, just as they were meditating bed, a loud ring startled the denizens of Glinn. The advent of Grenville Rose seemed to the servants a matter-of-course thing. They immediately commenced the preparation of his usual room. His uncle also was glad to see him, but to Mrs. Denison and Maude the thing was past comprehension. As for Grenville, he seemed perfectly callous—shook hands with his aunt, audaciously kissed his cousin, accompanying it by a pressure of the hand and a whisper, the combination of which sent the blood

to the very roots of Maude's hair. Then he devoted himself in a most prosaic manner to some cold boiled beef and pickles, pertinaciously sat the ladies out, and as he handed them their candles, whispered to Maude,—

“Hope for us yet, darling!”

“Now, uncle,” he said, “I want you to come with me to your study. You recollect that old box of deeds and papers you let me rummage through two years back, when I went so deep into heraldry, and spent a good bit of time tracing the family genealogy?”

“Yes, my boy; but you don't mean to say you've come down upon us like a whirlwind in this way to continue that somewhat vexatious pursuit?”

Grenville said no more till he was duly ensconced in the squire's sanctum, with the box containing those musty papers open by his side.

“Now, uncle,” he resumed, “I shall probably have to work for two or three hours through these old parchments before I arrive at the one I want. Of course I don't expect you to remain while I do so, but before you go to bed would you mind answering me two or three questions? You've always been very kind to me; Glian, indeed, has been my home almost as long as I can recollect. My father and mother died when I was so young, that

you and my aunt have almost stood in their place to me."

"Well, Gren, we've always been fond of you, and glad to have you here. But what the devil are you driving at?"

"Will you bear with me patiently to-night, even if I offend you? Will you wait till to-morrow, and hear then what I have to say before you decide about what I shall, perhaps, ask you to do for me?"

"What on earth are you making mysteries about? Not much use asking help from me, Gren; I'm about broke myself. You're in some money scrape, I suppose?"

Most of the squire's own scrapes having arisen from that prolific source, he naturally guessed his nephew must have involved himself similarly.

"No, uncle, it's not that. I love Maude, and want to marry her."

No words can paint Harold Denison's face at this last announcement. That there should be love-passages between Grenville and his daughter had never entered his head; and what could the young idiot mean by coming and telling him so now? He must know she was engaged to Pearman.

"Do you?" he said at length, in his most cynical manner. "That's a little unlucky, because she's

about to marry somebody else. I fancied that you must have heard so."

"You mean Pearman? Yes, I have heard that."

"Oh, you have? May I ask what particular inducements you have to offer, that you think it probable Maude will break off the prospect of a good match in your behalf? You may have achieved some unexampled success in your profession; I can only regret that I am as yet in ignorance of it."

"You only sneer at me, and I am talking in earnest," said Grenville, biting his lips.

"I can't see that that the least improves your position. You don't mean to tell me that you've had the audacity to come down here to upset an existing arrangement because you've been egregious ass enough to fall in love with your cousin? By the way, do you suppose Maude approves of this? Have you any reason to suppose that she would prefer half of your garret in the Temple to being mistress of Mannersley?"

Grenville Rose's face flushed, but he answered steadily,—

"All that must be an after-consideration. Uncle, answer we two questions—fairly, honestly, and as shortly as you please,—and then wait to hear what I may have to say to-morrow morning."

"If I am to listen, then, you'll be good enough to talk rather more rationally than you are doing to-night. What are your questions?"

"Believe me, uncle, I am speaking in your interests. Do you owe Pearman money?—Pshaw! I know you do. I want to know how much?"

"Really I had no idea you were keeping so watchful an eye over my interests. Prying into the affairs of one's relations was hardly deemed good taste in my day. I think I may safely leave that answer to your own natural acuteness. It seems to have stood you in good stead so far."

"Good God!" cried Grenville passionately, "you can't think so meanly of me? You won't let me help you? That you owe Pearman money requires no espionage to find out. I do know it—never mind how."

"Probably your philanthropy and increasing practice, then, led you to run down with a view to rescuing your uncle from his difficulties?" said Denison, bitterly.

"Yes, and no," said Rose, starting to his feet. "I have come for two reasons: firstly, to win Maude for my wife, if I can; secondly, to release you from all obligation to Pearman, if possible. If I knew what the amount was, it would make it easier for me. You don't choose to tell me. I can

only let you know to-morrow, then, what sum you can raise to meet such claims. Will you answer my other question? Do you honestly wish to see your daughter, a Denison of Glinn, married to Pearman?"

It was a home-thrust, this. The blood rushed to Harold Denison's temples, and his eyes had an angry light in them as he rejoined—

"This, I presume, sir, is a specimen of the easy manner of the young men of the present day. A piece of more infernal impertinence I don't remember ever encountering. May I trouble you to hand me that bedroom candle? I would suggest that the earlier you can make it convenient to depart to-morrow morning the less risk I run of being insulted, and for the present will wish you good-night."

"Stop; you must hear me," cried Grenville. "If to-morrow morning I can show you a way to clear all Pearman's claims against you, will you listen to me then, and acquit me of any intention of insulting you? Will you still persevere, uncle, in mating your daughter to the son of a bill-discounting solicitor? No, you won't; I know you better than you think. You are too far in Pearman's hands, or you think so, to give yourself fair play in the matter. There breathes no prouder man than you are. Trust me. Recollect the mouse

once saved the lion. As you hope for peace in future, trust me now."

Harold Denison paused. He had never seen his nephew break through his conventional, cool, easy manner in this wise before. He felt that he had been terribly in earnest all through their interview. Had he really some clue that might save him? And—yes—he did at the core of his heart bitterly regret that Maude should make what he deemed such a *mésalliance* as she was on the verge of. Then, perhaps, as far as it was in his selfish nature to care for anyone, he loved that child of his dead sister, who had just poured forth this torrent of frantic entreaty. The cynic mask dropped from his face as he extended his hand.

"I've had a deal to try me lately, Gren; difficulties have thickened and complicated above my head. You mustn't think anything of what I say. Show me, boy, how to raise ten thousand to-morrow morning, and we'll talk over other things afterwards. At all events, Maude sha'n't marry Pearman."

"Good night, uncle," said Grenville, as he clasped Denison's extended hand. "You can't think how happy you've made me. Leave me to work now, and if I'm not in a position to forbid the banns by breakfast to-morrow, may I never have another brief!"

Long and anxiously did Grenville wade through those villanous musty old parchments that night. It was a big box, and contained some two or three hundred such—old leases, agreements, mortgage-deeds since cancelled, deeds of trust, and marriage settlements of bygone Denisons now sleeping their long sleep in the quiet old churchyard. The clock had struck three ere, with a chill feeling of defeat, he took out the last musty paper. Could this be it? No! it was but some old parchment connected with a right of waterpower in the last century. Sadly Grenville tumbled the mass of papers back into the box, and gloomily sought his pillow. Had he dreamt of the deed he had looked for? “No,” he muttered, as he undressed; “I’ll swear I saw it once in that room. What can have become of it? Maude, my dearest, have I told you to hope, and have I hoped only to drink the bitter cup of disappointment?”

Bed was not of much use to Grenville Rose that night. He tried it; but, despite his journey and late search through those bewildering papers, sleep refused to visit his eyelids. A little more than three hours, and he was splashing in his bath, and, with knit brows, still meditating on what could have become of that all-essential parchment. “It looks bad, but I won’t give in. I must search further.

I'll have my head in every box, escritoire, cabinet, or cupboard in all Glinn before to-morrow night." In the meantime he recollected that Maude was an early riser, so, finished his toilet and betook himself quietly to the garden.

It was not long before he caught sight of the flutter of a light dress; a few seconds, and he was by Maude's side. Her face flushed as she met him, and her greeting was evidently forced and constrained.

"I thought, Maude, dearest," he said, "that I might have the luck to meet you before breakfast. It is the only chance I have of seeing you alone. Can you tell me still that you don't repent what you wrote in answer to my letter of some fortnight or so back?"

"Oh, Gren, what am I to say to you? What must you think of me? I never thought you cared about me in that way, you know. And then to write to you as I did! But Gren, dear, I did mean it. I fought hard to be true to you. What can I do? They say it rests with me to keep Glinn as a home to my father, and that, if I don't marry Mr. Pearman, we shall be wanderers about the world. That would kill them. I am very miserable. You don't know what I had to go through. I didn't give in till I could bear it no longer. Be kind

to me, Gren, please." And the grey eyes, swimming with tears, looked up into Rose's face with a piteous pleading expression that half maddened him.

"Don't know what you had to go through, my pet? Hum! I think I can make a pretty fair guess." And even as he passed his arm round his cousin's waist and kissed her, Grenville Rose's teeth were set hard. "It make's me mad, Maude, to think that that beast Pearman should ever dare to dream of you. No, child, I know pretty well the bullying you have had to go through. You wouldn't have proved false to your word, except under unfair pressure."

"Then you don't think so very badly of me?" asked the girl, shyly.

"I don't know," smiled her cousin, as he bent his head down to her. "I'll hear what you've got to say. Do you love me?"

"Oh, Gren!" And Maude dropped her flushed, tear-stained face on his shoulder, and submitted to the abstraction of unlimited kisses with the greatest meekness.

The tears were kissed away, and a smile was on her lips as she said, "You whispered last night, 'There is hope for us yet;' what did you mean?"

"I didn't say that; when you quote what I say, be good enough to be correct."

"But you did say so," said Maude, opening the grey eyes wide as usual when a thing passed her comprehension.

"No, Miss Denison; I said, 'Hope for us yet, *darling*.'"

"Oh, Gren, don't tease me; that's so like your old aggravating ways. Tell me."

"Well, dearest, I hoped last night to find a paper that would have, at all events, broken off your engagement with Pearman, and left you free to choose again."

A quiet pressure of his arm, and a soft "Well?"

"I didn't find it, Maude, and went to bed as miserable as a man can well do. Your father promised that Pearman should receive his *congé* if I could do what I dreamt I could. I made sure of finding that paper in the big oak chest in the study; but though I went steadily through them all, it wasn't there. Yet I'll swear it was once."

"When did you see it, Gren?"

"Don't you remember when I went mad upon heraldry, and was all for putting your genealogical tree to rights? I went through those papers then."

"Stop a moment," said the girl; "let me think. Yes," she continued, after a short pause; "and you used to bring them up to work at to the school-room—don't you recollect? And I'm almost sure

but didn't you throw a few of them into a drawer up there, saying they were no use, but you might make up a magazine story or two out of them some day."

"By Jove, Maude, you've hit it! I did, and that would be safe to be one of them. Come along, sweetheart mine, and see. No chance of their being disturbed, is there?"

"I should think not; but I haven't, I really believe, been in the room for the last two years. We'll soon see, though;" and the cousins tripped rapidly back to the house.

Poor old school-room! it was not often now that its shutters were thrown open to the golden light of spring. Very different were the old times, when Maude flitted about it daily, making sunshine within, whatever it might be without; when the whistle of the blackbird and the song of the thristle, the twitter of the swallow, and the scent of the jasmine, with other creepers, came drifting through the open casement. Here she had made much of her doll, fought with her nurse, and risen in more matured rebellion against her governess. Here Grenville had teased, petted, laughed at her, and embarked in various studies, genealogical or otherwise. No wonder they paused on the threshold; it was classic ground to them, at all events.

Those scenes of our youth, when we stand amidst them years afterwards, how quaintly they move us ! It is a species of melancholy pleasure that steals across us. We smile as we think sadly about the boyish scrapes they recall, and how light our hearts were in those days gone by. I once stood in the famous schoolroom at Harrow, where, midst scores of unknown names, are inscribed many such as Byron, Peel, &c. Did they ever come back and meditate on how that prearranged battle with Jones, who never emerged from obscurity, or that licking they destined for little Tompkins, also unknown to fame, distracted their mind some hot summer afternoon about the time their knives were busy on the old oak panelling ?

Grenville Rose, however, though he may pause for a moment, is far too much in earnest and immersed in the present to give much thought to old memories. Maude smiles softly as he throws open the windows, and she recalls those long pleasant afternoons they two have passed there. She has been so miserable of late—she is so quietly happy now. It is true this paper must be found : but she believes in Gren, as only a young girl can in a lover. It is the first time he has been with her in that character. It is so sweet to be told you are loved at eighteen, when that confession is made by the right person. No

wonder the girl's face looked bright. "Now, Maude, quick—which is the drawer? This, eh!" Hurriedly the drawer is dragged out; but alas! though all sorts of odds and ends, a book or two on heraldry, "Telemaque," "Pamela," a French dictionary, etc., are discovered, no sign of law papers meets the eye.

"Mistaken the drawer, pet, I suppose?" exclaimed Grenville, with a look of disappointment he struggled hard to conceal; and then continued his search. But, no; every drawer and cupboard of the school-room is ransacked in vain. Many a relic of their merry old days there comes to light, but nothing in the shape of deed or parchment. Maude stood aloof towards the conclusion of the search, half leaning, half sitting on the table. Her face was serious enough now, and the well-marked eyebrows rather knit. She felt that the promised smooth water of the morning was as yet by no means realised. Since Grenville had kissed her, and personally told his love, she felt endued with infinite powers of opposition to the Pearman alliance.

"It's no use, Maude; the paper I want is not here," said Grenville, at length. "I must search elsewhere."

"So you shall, Gren. Ring the bell. I have an idea."

Her cousin did as he was bid, and when a stray

housemaid, in considerable bewilderment, eventually made her way to the disused room, Miss Denison said, sharply, "Tell Mrs. Upcroft she's wanted here directly—directly, mind;—and don't let her be as long about getting here as you have been."

"Now, look here, Gren," continued Maude, "those papers were there. Nobody but Mrs. Upcroft would have dared move them. But, you see, she has known me as a child, and I am always hard put to it to hold my own with her. If she don't happen quite to recollect what she's done with them, she'll give me any answer, and won't even try to take the trouble to remember. If I can make nothing of her, then you must chime in and frighten her. Of course she don't want to conceal them; but she will know she ought not to have meddled with them, and don't like what she terms being put out."

There was a tap at the door as Maude finished her speech, and her cousin had but just time to give a nod of intelligence as the housekeeper entered.

"Sorry to disturb you, Mrs. Upcroft," said Miss Denison, blandly, "but I want to know what you have done with the papers that used to inhabit that drawer?"

"I'm sure I don't know nothing about no papers. You might have been sure of that, I think, Miss

Maude, before you sent for me, and the butcher just here for orders an' all;" and the housekeeper looked as sulky as she rightly dared. She had for years done as she pleased with Mrs. Denison, and was bitterly jealous of any interference of Miss Maude.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Upcroft, if you don't know anything about the removal of such papers, you should do so. Things ought not to be moved from one room to another without the knowledge and license of yourself. Will you be kind enough to recollect what became of those papers? They happen just now to be of great importance."

"That's so like you, Miss Maude. You were just the same as a child. Whatever you wanted must be done right off at once. I forget about those old papers now, and must run away to the butcher; but I'll perhaps think what became of them in a little. I'm afraid, though, they went to light fires with;" and with a malicious smile the housekeeper turned to go.

Maude Denison's eyes flashed, and her lips quivered. She laced her hands closely together; but all she said was the monosyllable "Gren." Small mercy was Mrs. Upcroft likely to meet with at his hands; her insolence had already made Rose's teeth grate.

"Unfortunate Mrs. Upcroft," he observed with

an evil smile; "but I am afraid the butcher will have to wait for some time before he next enjoys the pleasure of your society. You see, you have unluckily admitted, before myself and Miss Denison—two witnesses, bear in mind—that you were privy to the removal or abstraction of a deed of value, even if you did not actually remove such deed with your own hands. The law, of which you are aware I am an expounder, calls a casualty of this kind by the name of felony, and recompenses it with varied terms of transportation. It is unpleasant, Mrs. Upcroft; but I fear, unless you can recollect where those particular papers are, there is nothing for it but to wait here patiently until the police escort I am about to summon has arrived for you ——"

The sulky insolence was taken well out of the unhappy housekeeper before Rose's speech was finished. Like most people of that class, she had but very vague ideas of the power of the law, and an almost morbid horror of encountering it in any shape. The barrister's accusation, too, sounded very plausible to unpractised ears.

"Oh! Mr. Grenville, after knowing me all this time, whoever'd have thought you'd go against me in this way? Oh dear! oh dear! what shall I do?"

"Now for a *tour de force*," thought Grenville.

"Do, you obstinate fool! Do what you ought to have done, at once. Tell Miss Maude this instant where those papers are. None of your confounded nonsense about not remembering. You know perfectly well what you've done with them. I'll give you two minutes to collect your ideas, and if you can't do it by the end of that time, I'll lock you in here and send for the police."

"Oh, please don't! I don't know, rightly. I think, Miss, they were all put up in an old trunk in the garret overhead," sobbed the now thoroughly cowed housekeeper.

"Go and see, Maude," said Rose, quietly.

Miss Denison tripped out of the room, leaving Grenville to the quiet contemplation of his victim.

"Oh my!—oh my!" sobbed the housekeeper, "to think of those old rubbishy things being of any consequence! And what right have you, sir, to say I took them? To think of my being accused of taking things, after all these years! But I suppose a poor servant's character is not to be taken away for nothing? I'll have the law of you, I will."

"You're right, Mrs. Upcroft; you will, and very much to your detriment, too, if the paper I want is not forthcoming. You're not talking to a woman now. You'll neither frighten me, nor get the

slightest mercy at my hands. You're in as fair a way of spending the next seven years at Portland as anybody I know; and, by heavens, I'll take pretty good care you get there! They have stood your insolence long enough here. If you want to take a few things with you, I'll ring, and one of the maids can put up your box. I'll run through your accounts after you are gone, and fancy I can substantiate a tolerable charge of peculation to boot."

The housekeeper had rallied a little, but this last speech of Rose's completely crushed her. She knew that she had carried on a systematic scale of robbery for years. She flopped down on her knees, and implored that mercy might be shown her, backing her entreaties with many sobs and tears.

"Here they all are, Gren," said Maude, entering the room. "I tumbled them into this towel; I couldn't carry them in my hands. Good gracious, Mrs. Upcroft, do get up. What is the matter?"

"Stay where you are, and apologise to Miss Denison for your impertinence, before you rise," thundered Grenville. "Quick, woman, and I'll be lenient about the second charge I have against you."

"Oh, please forgive me, Miss Maude! I didn't mean it—indeed I didn't!" whimpered the crest-fallen housekeeper.

"There, that'll do," said Rose, contemptuously, while Maude stood in open-eyed wonderment at the complete subjugation of her ancient foe. "Eureka!" he shouted, as, after running his eye over some half a dozen mouldy papers, a more musty parchment than usual came beneath his ken. "This will do. You can go, Mrs. Upcroft, without a police escort for the present: but you had better bear in mind, in future, that if you are insolent to Miss Denison you will settle with me, and that next time I promise you it shall be a settlement in full."

With a low curtsy the discomfited housekeeper left the room—anger raging in her breast, but mixed with a strong proportion of fear. Her malevolence would know no bounds if she should ever see her opportunity; but for the present Grenville Rose had established a wholesome terrorism. Her feelings were much like those of the Indian mutineers after the fall of Delhi.

"Let her go, my darling," said Grenville, as he stole his arm round Maude's waist. "This is the deed I wanted. I must leave for town directly after breakfast. Armed with this, I think I can safely say Pearman shall trouble you no more. What guerdon is your champion to have when he has rescued you from the dragon—eh, *amina mia*?"

“Nothing, I’m afraid.”

“You ingrate ! What do you mean ?”

“What I said. I fear, Gren,” replied the girl, as she lifted her smiling face to his, “that I have given my champion all I have to give already, and if that don’t satisfy him, I can only ——”

Miss Denison’s further views on the subject were never promulgated, for reasons that are palpably obvious ; nor will an ordinary observer be much astonished to hear that the cousins put in a disgracefully late appearance at the breakfast table—a fact that may be quoted in support of my great theory, that early rising is dependent on fictitious excitement, and not in accordance with natural laws.

Breakfast over, Grenville had a hurried interview with the squire, the result of which was great jubilation on Harold Denison’s part, and a remark that he had always had an immense opinion of his (Grenville’s) talents, and that he thought present circumstances already justified his opinion.

“Good-bye, uncle,” said Rose, as he stood on the steps of the carriage that was to convey him to the station. “I think I’m right, but you mustn’t blame me if I’ve made a mistake. I’ll telegraph as soon as I have had counsel’s opinion on my friend here;” and he tapped his travelling bag, in which reposed the anxiously-sought-for deed.

"God bless you, boy! I feel you're right—you must be. Good-bye. Drive on."

"Stop—stop! he can't go like that;" and Maude, like a flash of sunlight, dashed through the porch. The idea of anybody leaving Glinn without a flower in his buttonhole! "Gren, dear, one moment, while I put this in your coat. Keep it," she whispered, "to remind you of me."

"Not much necessity for that," he replied, as he bent over her. "But you shall see it, darling, next time I come. Good-bye!"

"Not for long; mind and write; they won't care now, will they?"

"Can't help it if they do. I *shall*."





CHAPTER XI.

AN AFTERNOON AT TATTERSALL'S.

IT is Monday afternoon. The usual crowd of refuse humanity clusters, like bees, round the door of the great turf exchange. Ex-pugilists, low publicans, noblemen's butlers that were traders on men's weaknesses or lust—greasy, brass-chained, shovel-hatted, brazen-throated, brazen-browed—with woolfish greed of gain stamped more or less on their features—the hungry, gold-seeking mob oscillate round that low doorway. The turfite's temple of Janus never shuts; the fell war between backers and layers never ceases.

Eager murmurs are heard midst that vulture-faced crowd:—

“He went very bad in the market this morning.”
“Tell me they offered threes, at the clubs.” “What’s

wrong with him?" "What against The Saint?" and similar hurried interrogatories fall on the ear. Now a brougham, now a well-appointed cab, whose driver throws the reins from his lavender-kidded hands to the next tiger; now the Hansoms of ordinary life drop their respective occupants at the small doorway.

The Subscription Room is full; round the big circular desks much paying and receiving is going on. The sofas round the room are crowded with loungers; the tessellated pavement is trod by a fluctuating mass, who ebb and flow to different points as some one or two large speculators vociferate the odds, or cease to do so. It is the settling day after the broken week at Newmarket, and sinister rumours are rife about the first favourite for the Two Thousand. He has stood at five to two for a long while, but report says that three to one has been laid and offered, to any amount of money, at the racing clubs this morning.

Half-past four—fatal hour for many a favourite at Tattersall's, the adjustment of last week's accounts—is over, and the ring has time to turn its attention to forthcoming events.

"Three to one against Coriander for the Guineas," is vociferated in more than one quarter. Nothing positive seems known about the horse; but a panic

has set in, and backers stand aloof from a wager that yesterday they would have jumped at. Some few adventurous men take the increased odds to a little, but speedily repent as they find the disposition to lay that price rapidly increasing.

At this juncture Pearman, attired in deep mourning, entered the Subscription Room. It was but a few days since his father's funeral, and, to do him justice, he would not have been there had not a friend telegraphed to him early in the day the onslaught that was being made on Coriander. Business must be attended to, he argued, whether racing or otherwise, and knowing his horse to be perfectly well, he ran up at once to town to stop this demonstration against it.

Foremost among the opponents of the favourite was a big, corpulent north countryman, who enjoyed the reputation of by no means throwing his money away. In turf parlance, when he persistently bet against a horse, "he knew something."

"Here's 1,000 to 300 against Coriander!" vociferated Mr. Plyart, for the second or third time.

"Put it down to me," said Pearman, quietly.

"Yes, sir. Will you take it twice?"

Pearman nodded.

The bookmaker pencilled it into his note-book. The crowd, attracted by the fact of Coriander's

owner coming to the rescue, had surged round them; but no sooner had Mr. Plyart completed his memorandum, than he reiterated his hoarse war-cry of "Here's 1,000 to 300 against Coriander!" a shout in which he was immediately joined by two or three other large speculators.

"Put it down again, Plyart," said Pearman, grimly; and now, inspired with confidence by the way in which his owner had supported him, several backers invested on the favourite.

For a little, it seemed as if Coriander would rally in the market; but the layers of odds far exceeded the backers; and finally came forth Mr. Plyart's ominous shout of "4,000 to 1,000 against the favourite for 'The Guineas!'"

"I'll take that!" cried Pearman, though his astonishment knew no bounds; and, as the bookmaker noted it, he remarked, with a sneer, "You'll find my horse bad to get out of on the Two Thousand day. I don't think you will hedge, except at a loss."

"Perhaps so, sir—perhaps so; but I'll bet you an even hundred he don't start."

"Done! and I'll make it 5,000, if you like?"

"No; you might start him on three legs. I won't risk more than a hundred on his not starting; but here's 4,000 to 1,000 he don't win, once more."

Sam Pearman shook his head, and, at all events

for once in his life, walked out of Tattersall's thoroughly puzzled. He knew his horse to be perfectly well, he had seen him that morning. As far as he *had* tried him, he had never tried a three-year-old better. What the devil were these ring-men going on ?

They make great mistakes at times, these members of the magic circle. Their brethren of the Stock Exchange occasionally get the worst of it also ; but, as a rule, either backers or shareholders are justified in feeling alarm at a persistent assault on what their money may be invested in. The decline of the favourite for a big race in the market is hardly so disastrous to the world in general as bank shares dropping twenty per cent. below premium. Before Pearman left London the next day, he was aware, from various sources, that Coriander's status in the betting was still further shaken, and that as much as five to one had been offered against the crack of forty-eight hours ago. He thought of it all the way home, and felt more utterly bewildered than he had ever done before in the whole of his turf experience.

Could Sam Pearman have been present at a conference held in Silky Dallison's rooms, between that astute gentleman and Grenville Rose, though he would have been still a long way from enlightened on the subject, yet he would have learnt a good deal.

It was the Friday night before that eventful Monday. Grenville had returned from Glinn the day previous. A mouldy old parchment lay on the table between them ; it had apparently been consulted and thrown aside.

“ Rumford says the deed is perfectly good, and Mr. Denison is quite certain there has been no enfranchisement. That’s the case, Gren, isn’t it ? ”

Rose nodded, and Mr. Dallison for a few minutes puffed meditatively at his cigar.

“ Well,” he continued, “ the law part I leave to you. I presume that is all right. Rumford’s opinion is quite good enough to go on, and old Denison, you say, was quite clear there has never been any enfranchisement. Odd there should not have been ; but no doubt Pearman defunct was quite unaware of the existence of our friend here ; ” and Dallison jerked his head in the direction of the parchment. “ He wasn’t the man to leave such a blot in his game if he knew it. Though for the matter of that it was no blot so long as he lived. Now, look here, I must trust to you for the legal working of this affair : the racing part I can manage. We’ve got Sam Pearman in a regular hole, and, better still, he doesn’t know it. I can make probably a good bit of money out of this, both for you and myself, without any risk whatever ; but ulterior events must

decide that. Mr. Denison, at all events, must make a good bit; but without hurting his interests, in fact rather furthering them, you and I might pick up some five thousand pounds apiece. Do you understand?"

"Not in the least," replied Grenville.

"Well, there's not much necessity you should. Leave that to me; but you must work the legal machinery as I direct. Can you put it in motion by Wednesday or Thursday?"

"Let's say Thursday, certain," rejoined Rose.

"Very good, that will do; but don't let's have any mistakes about it."

"All right," nodded the other. "I'll guarantee that, and go down myself."

"Good. You told me the stake you were playing for, to start with, and as you are in real earnest about winning a wife, I think one may trust you. I shall commence operations at once. I'll see Plyart the bookmaker to-morrow, and put the first part of the programme in his hands. We're going, you and I, to lay about a couple of thousand each against Coriander; and I'm going to give him free license to do as much as he likes for himself."

"Well—what next?" inquired Rose; "there must be no ultimate chance of my losing two thousand pounds, mind?"

"Certainly not. All I mean, at present, is to drive Coriander back in the betting as far as I can. When the news of your proceedings arrives, when I shall take good care to disseminate at once, I flatter myself we shall have got him at twenty to one, or thereabouts, for 'The Guineas.' We must then be guided by what terms you make with Pearman."

"I think I follow you, Silky. And now each to his avocation, and good-night."

"Good-night," laughed Dallison, as he followed Grenville to the door. "If ever Sam Pearman was in a biggish hole, he is just now. Mind, you've a clever man against you, though; so, do your work thoroughly. Never forget *your* stake."

"No. I'm not likely to, if you knew all."

"Got his measles pretty bad, apparently," observed the astute host, to himself, as Gren's footsteps died away down the staircase. "Hope his success there really does depend, as he says, on this business coming off all right; else, when it's a regular case of 'spoons,' never a soul, ever I knew, could be counted on in a business way—or any other way for the matter of that. *It is risky*, by Jove! with a confederate in this state. D—n it, I believe I'm a fool to trust him! That idiot, Jem Durfey, lost me a pony last year at Lord's—crack bowler of his eleven—and blest if they hadn't to play with

ten men because he was seeing some chit of a cousin off at Paddington Station. Wonder why they do it! Never was spoons myself but once, and"—and despite his tirade, Dallison sat down and mused for more than an hour over that bygone flirtation of eight years ago. He might be cynical about all that sort of thing now, yet there was a woman still living who could make his pulses leap, should she meet him. It is a fact that, in some cases, women retain their sway years after they are not only unconscious of it, but have almost forgotten their admirer. It is true we also sometimes see the converse of this, when a woman would fain pick up the dropped stitches of a bygone love affair, but the male creature has freed himself from the yoke.

The early train on Thursday morning saw Grenville Rose, accompanied by Mr. Nightjar, solicitor, junior partner of the firm of Hawk, Sparrowbill and Co., on his way to Slantover, the nearest railway station to Mannersley, from which it was distant about four miles. Having arrived at the latter place, and ascertained that Pearman was at home, Grenville sent in his card, and a request to see that gentleman for a few minutes, on business of importance. Now, it so happened, that though Rose had a thorough knowledge of Sam Pearman, the other knew nothing whatever of him. He had never en-

countered him personally, except to exchange that sentence or two after the Xminster ball. I don't know whether even then he had identified him; but of a surety that scene had pretty well faded from his memory, especially as regarded the personality of the other actor therein. It was as an entire stranger that he received the young barrister.

"I must apologise for troubling you, Mr. Pearman; but I am here as the representative of Mr. Harold Denison."

"You could not have come with better credentials, Mr. Rose. Charmed to see both you and your friend:" he glanced at the cards in his hands. "Mr. Nightjar, I think? Will you take some lunch now, or after we have had our little palaver?"

"Nothing, thanks; our time is precious, and we will detain you as briefly as maybe. You are, of course, aware that there is a death-fine on Mannersley; or, to speak more intelligibly, that the owner of Glinn has a right of heriot over your manor on the death of any holder thereof?"

"A right of heriot!" muttered Pearman. "No, I never heard of such claim; and I think my father died in complete ignorance of any such right."

Though far from suspecting what was about to take place, Sam Pearman knew enough of law to understand this expression.

“You had better read that deed, Nightjar. Such right exists, and has been always exercised; generally compromised as a fine—a course we propose to adopt in the present instance.”

The solicitor laughed, and opened, first a somewhat musty parchment, and then a document consisting of some two or three sheets of foolscap. “I will be as short as I can, Mr. Pearman, but the story is a little intricate to follow. I must premise that Mannersley was by no means originally part of the Glinn property. It seems to have been granted by the Abbot of Xminster to one Hugh Wilson, yeoman, for service rendered, conditional upon his bearing arms for the Abbey, and being ever ready to do service under the banner of Sir James Denison of Glinn, the then lay lord and champion of the abbey. He further lay under the right of heriot; in the first place, to the monks of Xminster, who were entitled to claim three beasts upon the death of Hugh Wilson, or any one of his descendants holding Mannersley, as an acknowledgment of the fealty they owed to the abbey; in the second place, of one beast to the lords of Glinn, as a similar acknowledgment to the secular representative of the abbey. But the monks of Xminster were swept away in the Reformation under Henry VIII., and of course that right of heriot disappeared. Still

the masters of Glinn continued to exercise their claim upon every occasion for rather over two hundred years, at the expiration of which time, in consequence of the decay of the Wilson family, Mannersley fell, by purchase, into their hands, where it remained till sold to Mr. Pearman twelve years ago. The curious thing is, this right of heriot still exists; the owner of Glinn is still entitled to demand whatever beast he may choose upon the Mannersley estate upon the death of an owner thereof, and the successor can but submit to the claim. Do you follow me, Mr. Pearman?"

"Pretty well, I think. May I ask when was this right of heriot last enforced, and in what shape?"

"In 1734 Stephen Denison, Esq., of Glinn, received the sum of £25 in lieu of right of heriot on the death of Matthew Wilson. That was the last case. It was his heir and successor that sold it to the Denisons—that being Stephen, before mentioned."

"Well, gentlemen," rejoined Pearman, "of course I am not quite prepared as yet to acknowledge this right—I must consult my solicitors first on the subject. Still, it looks plausible enough. I am afraid," said he, laughing, "money don't go

quite so far as in Matthew Wilson's day. What, may I ask, do you assess me at?"

"Ten thousand pounds," replied Grenville Rose, quietly taking up the parable, as had been agreed between himself and his coadjutor beforehand.

"Ten thousand! Why, you're mad!" But there was no laugh now in his rejoinder. His quick intelligence gathered at a glance what a desperate position he was in; and, moreover, that the opposite side were pretty well aware of it.

"We're certainly not mad. I don't think we are foolish. I don't pretend to know much about these things myself, but the veriest tyro knows the first favourite for the Two Thousand, ten days before ~~the~~ race, is worth a big sum. Mr. Denison is in difficulties; money is an object to him. We give you the option of paying £10,000 fine or letting us make what we can out of Coriander. I fancy there will be plenty of people to bid for him, either one way or the other—I mean either to try and win with him, or to take very good care he don't."

Sam Pearman's turf training stood him in good stead. He had learnt how to lose. He swallowed the ferocious execration that rose to his lips. "You will allow me to look at that deed?" he inquired; "and, of course, you cannot expect an answer till I have had time to communicate with my solicitors."

"Certainly," returned Grenville; "and your solicitors may also peruse it at the offices of Messrs. Hawk, Sparrowbill, and Co. I tell you fairly we have had counsel's opinion upon it, and there is no doubt the right of heriot still exists. We mean to make the most we can out of it, and either take Coriander or a £10,000 equivalent."

Sam Pearman ran his eye rapidly over that old deed, which stated, after some technicalities: "And whereas Hugh Wilson, yeoman, did render good and secret service last time Ralph Eversley did lay claim most sacrilegious and outrageous on lands appertaining to us, abbot and chapter of Xminster, in the year of our Lord 1456, we do hereby grant to him and his body's heirs the fee-simple of the manor of Mannersley, in perpetuity, on the right of heriot of three beasts, to be delivered as token of fealty to us the said abbot and chapter of Xminster; with further right of heriot on the part of Sir James Denison of Glinn, and his heirs, to claim one beast in acknowledgment of allegiance to him as lay-baron and secular leader of the retainers of Xminster Abbey. The above acknowledgments of fealty and allegiance to be paid on the death of the then holder by his successor and heir male.—Signed, Edmund Gervoise, Abbot of Xminster, by the grace of God, March 10th, 1456."

"All very well!" said Pearman; "but if this is all you have to go upon, you can scarcely expect me to pay much attention to the claim, more especially when fixed at such a preposterous figure."

"No, of course not; we never thought you would. Serve the writ of seizure, Nightjar, and then I think we need intrude on Mr. Pearman no longer."

"Two questions, please, before you go," replied the owner of Mannersley, as he accepted a neat legal document from the solicitor. "First, time is an object, at all events to me, in this case. Have you any objection to say whose opinion you have taken on that obsolete parchment?"

"Not in the least. Rumford's. Refer your solicitors to him."

"Good man; getting a little old, perhaps, but still safe. Liable to mistakes, as they all are, of course."

"We consider him good enough. Anything more?"

"Well, yes; are you aware of my peculiar relations with Mr. Denison's family just now?"

"Perfectly; and equally so with the causes which led to that result."

"You are travelling rather out of the record, sir," rejoined Pearman. "I will see Mr. Denison on the subject myself to-morrow."

"Certainly, you will find him at home; but permit me to say that I consider I have expounded his views pretty accurately, so far."

"Perhaps so; but I've known people change their views. Might I ask are you related to the family in any way?"

"I am Mr. Denison's nephew, and have the honour to wish you good-morning."

Pearman bowed, and rang the bell.

"Well, Nightjar," said Grenville, when they got outside, "so far so good; we've done all we can; to-morrow will be the real tug of war. You go back to town with the deed. Dallison will be waiting for you; tell him all that has passed, and that he shall hear from me, as agreed upon, the minute I hear anything definite. Meanwhile, good-bye; I'm off to Glinn. Yes, I turn off here; it's not three miles across the fields."

I suppose it was a case of animal magnetism, but it certainly was odd that Maude should have selected that for her afternoon stroll. Nevertheless, it is a fact that as Grenville Rose jumped over the stile at the corner of Edgenton Firs (a large plantation so called), he found that young lady seated on a grassy bank on the other side, with Dan couched at her feet—one of those coincidences that I presume has happened to most of us in our time, and

sincerely do I pity the few whose want of luck and lack of observation have debarred them such sunshiny moments.

"Well, Gren," she inquired, as she rose to her feet, "have you overthrown my ogre? Am I a free girl again?"

"I don't know, darling—the great battle comes off to-morrow; but I think I can promise you shall never marry Pearman."

"Don't talk nonsense; you know I never would, now. Before you came down it was different. I was weak, and foolish, and miserable. That story is all over, and I'm forgiven—at least, I thought so;" and Maude looked shyly but archly into her lover's face.

Grenville behaved after the manner of young men generally when so circumstanced—those quiet footpaths over the fields have a deal to answer for—and what "Don't, please, Gren!" meant, I must leave to the discrimination of the reader, merely remarking, Grenville Rose either decided it meant nothing, or could not have heard it.

"But do you think you can put things a bit right for papa?" inquired Maude, when she at last extricated herself.

"I hope so; but we must wait till to-morrow to know for certain."



CHAPTER XII.

COMING TO TERMS.

SAM PEARMAN had received the writ of service of this heriot claim with apparent equanimity. It must be borne in mind that practised speculators on the turf, as elsewhere, are accustomed to take their reverses with much outward nonchalance. But, nevertheless, when his visitors had departed he commenced pacing the room after the manner of a caged tiger. It was not likely Denison, whom he had deemed so entirely in his power, would have ventured upon such a bold stroke as this except under very high legal opinion, and whatever it might suit him at the time to say in disparagement of Rumford, he was quite aware that no counsel's opinion in London stood in higher repute. He foresaw, at one sweep, the upset of all his forth-

coming schemes. His father had told him how Harold Denison had first taken his pretensions to Maude's hand. He knew, none better, how, under the pressure brought to bear upon him, the squire of Glinn's self-interest had been enlisted in his behalf. He was far too keen a judge to think that he had any hold upon Maude's affections; his idea was that she just liked him sufficiently to marry him if her parents made a point of it. He was entirely ignorant of there being a favoured lover in the field. He felt little doubt that if Denison could extricate himself from his power—and should he establish this claim he would go near to do so—his marriage would be postponed to the Greek Kalends.

Now for the other point. If he disputes this "right of heriot," could they prevent his running Coriander for the Two Thousand? That became a question of great importance. He had backed the horse heavily—yes, taking last Monday's work into consideration, very heavily—for the race; and if he was not to run, there at once was a loss of some thousands, to say nothing of the big stake he had hoped to win over that event.

"By ——!" he exclaimed, "that's it! There is some inkling of this in the turf market, and that's the reason the horse has been so much laid against lately. This accounts for Plyart's deter-

mined attack, and his betting me a hundred even that he don't start. I'm off to town by the three train."

Pearman drove straight to his solicitor's, from Waterloo Station. Office hours were over, but he contrived to catch one of the firm—as shrewd an attorney as one would often meet with. He shook his head over the case, more especially when he heard of Rumford's adverse opinion.

"I don't like it, Mr. Pearman, at all, but I will look over the Mannersley title-deeds the first thing to-morrow morning, and then go over to Hawk, Sparrowbill & Co., and ask them if they will let me see Rumford's opinion. But these unenfranchised heriots are the very deuce to deal with if the right, as in your case, is of great value, and the opposite side are aware of it."

"Well, you must make out all you can for me. What time shall I be at your office to-morrow?—the earlier the better, mind. Time in this case is worth something like half-a-sovereign a minute to me."

"Certainly, sir. Say ten; and you mustn't mind if you have to wait for me; I shall be conferring with the enemy, but I'll be back at the office as near that as I can."

"That'll just do. I must catch the eleven train from Waterloo, if possible. Good-night!"

SAM PEARMAN strolled into his club. He was, as one may naturally suppose, in no great humour for conversation. It is one of the drawbacks of these pleasant caravansaries that the old adage of "Save me from my friends" is unattainable therein. You always run the chance of some garrulous acquaintance discoursing upon that amusing case in the Divorce Court, utterly unconscious that you are one of the parties implicated. You are asked, perhaps, after your wife, by some old friend of bygone years who is entirely ignorant that you have either buried or separated from her. Our taciturn British reserve has its advantages. Why should there not be a small coffee-room instituted for sulky members, where attempts at conversation should be penalised with expulsion? There are times when we hate even ourselves—much more our fellow-creatures.

Pearman was imbued with a considerable amount of this latter feeling as he strolled into the Theatine and ordered his dinner. His Nemesis was awaiting him. Ere he had finished his soup, a blue-eyed, fair-haired, vacuous member had greeted him, and asked him what the deuce was the matter with Coriander?

"Nothing. The horse is well enough. Why?"

"Why, haven't you seen the evening papers?"

"No; I have only just got to town. What about it?"

"They are laying all sorts of prices against him. He is quoted at fifteen to one offered, and rumour says, in some cases, twenties have been laid."

"Hum," grunted Pearman. "You'd better lay it, Curzon, if you think he's gone. I can only say, when you see he's about to start for the Two Thousand, I recommend you to hedge every shilling, if you do."

"Thanks," drawled the other, and walked away to disseminate what he had gathered from Coriander's owner.

His solicitor the next morning gave Pearman little satisfaction. Messrs. Hawk and Sparrowbill had been most courteous; they had allowed him to see the deed, and also Sergeant Rumford's opinion thereon. In his humble opinion, the case was very strong; the writ of seizure they had issued would hold perfectly good; they might take Coriander when they liked. "And I am afraid, sir," he concluded, "that we should only get cast if we tried to upset."

"Then they can prevent my running the horse next week, if I contest this claim legally at once?"

"I should be afraid so, really; but in negotiation you had better insist upon your right to, of course,

do what you like with the horse till their claim to him is established."

"Very good. Now I am off."

On arrival at Xminster, Pearman proceeded direct to Glinn, and inquired for Mr. Denison. He was shown into the library, and speedily joined by that gentleman.

"I have come over, Mr. Denison, to have some conversation with you about the somewhat preposterous claim of yours as to 'right of heriot' over Mannersley."

"I am advised," replied the squire, "that the claim is a perfectly valid one, and of course, just now valuable."

"My dear sir, I am not alluding to the right or wrong of the case; but, situated as we are to each other, it seems rather absurd our going to law with each other."

"Better, Mr. Pearman, say, situated as we were. Moreover, the nearer and dearer the relationship, the more acrimonious the law-suit: for a bitter quarrel commend me to brothers, from Cain and Abel downwards."

"Then I am to understand that my engagement with Miss Denison is at an end? May I ask upon what grounds it is broken off?"

"My dear sir, your Creator gave you understand-

ing; not I. If you wish to know upon what terms you stand with Miss Denison, see her, and don't trouble me."

"You said 'situated as we were.'"

"Of course I did. I owed you £10,000, and hadn't got it. Now, it seems, you also owe me £10,000, which, of course, makes my not being able to pay you of very little consequence."

"But you consented to my engagement with your daughter."

"And would now, if I thought you'd ever want it."

"I don't understand you."

"Then it's no use continuing this conversation."

"Will you answer me a straightforward question? May I ask you if my engagement with your daughter is still to hold good? I care little about this other affair, if that remains as it was."

"And don't I keep telling you that that being an arrangement between Maude and yourself, if you have any doubts upon the subject, you had better see her?"

"I will ask leave to do so presently. In the mean time, Mr. Denison, to return to this claim of heriot——"

"Excuse me, Mr. Pearman; that I can't touch upon. I have put myself completely in my nephew's hands regarding that subject; but I will

send him to you at once, and merely remark that any arrangement you may make with him has my cordial assent."

Grenville Rose, meanwhile, had early cognisance of Pearman's arrival, and prepared at once for the encounter. He first ordered a horse to be saddled, and a groom to be in readiness to take a message to Xminster. Next he summoned his cousin to come to him in his uncle's sanctum.

"Maude, dearest," he said, as she entered, "the crisis of our fate is at hand. I want you to come and be my aide-de-camp. You must be all eye and brain this morning."

"Yes. What is it, Gren?" And the grey eyes opened wide as she saw the grave, earnest look upon her lover's face.

"Pearman is here, and your father is gone to see him. But in a few minutes I shall be sent for. I'm playing for a great stake this morning, Maude; to wit, the freeing your father from his difficulties, and to win your own sweet self for mine own love. Listen. James has got a horse all ready to go for me to Xminster. You see these telegram sheets: I shall come here for one minute, and fill one up with a message. Mind James has it, and is off with it at once. You see he does not linger. It is of the utmost consequence to us."

"I understand, Gren. Anything more?"

"Yes; you may as well write Pearman a polite dismissal, unless you would rather see him."

"Oh, no! I'd rather write."

"Well, then, do so at once; and I think there will be no necessity for your seeing him. But if you must"—and he looked a little anxiously towards her.

"I shall know what to say—don't be afraid of that,—though I would much rather not."

Here Harold Denison entered the room, jubilant and triumphant.

"The overture is played out, Grenville, and the real business of the piece is about to begin. I've told him you are my representative in this matter, and that I am entirely in your hands."

"Thanks, uncle."

And Rose went off to encounter Pearman. He found that gentleman restlessly pacing the library. A curt greeting passed between them.

"Now, Mr. Rose, we had better proceed to business at once. Time is valuable to me upon this occasion."

"The sooner the better," rejoined Grenville.

"Since I last saw you I have been to town in connection with this affair, and am prepared to admit that you have a better case than I at first

thought you possessed. Under these circumstances, and standing as I do with regard to Miss Denison ——”

“Hadn’t we better confine ourselves solely to the business in hand, and not advert to contingencies that may never happen?” interrupted Grenville, quietly.

“That’s it, then?” said Pearman, coarsely. “Miss Denison intends cancelling her engagement, as part of the programme? I thought as much.”

“Excuse me if I suggest the propriety of keeping Miss Denison’s name entirely out of our conversation. That is a matter upon which I have nothing to say. The question lies in a nutshell. Do you intend to ransom your horse, or is that writ of service, of which you received notice yesterday, to be carried into effect?”

“I shall dispute the whole thing, and place the affair in the hands of my solicitors.”

“Very good. Under these circumstances it is only right to tell you that I have already applied for an injunction to prevent your running Coriander for any race till the case is decided.”

“Ridiculous! Upon what grounds, pray?”

“Upon the grounds of possible injury, and probable deterioration of value.”

“What do you mean?”

"What I say. He might be injured, or he might be beat: in either case, he would not be so valuable a horse as he is now."

Pearman said nothing for a minute or two; at last he exclaimed abruptly, "Do you ever bet, Mr. Rose?"

"Certainly not!" was the Jesuitical reply: for, though Grenville Rose never did meddle with turf matters, though he had not made a single bet on the forthcoming "Two Thousand," he was yet aware that Dallison was betting for him; albeit he neither knew nor cared to know, so far, the particulars of the transaction.

"You can hardly suppose I shall pay such a sum as £10,000. Perhaps you will state what compromise you really intend to offer me?"

"I have none other to propose, than that you sign Mr. Denison a release of the mortgage you hold to that amount upon Glinn."

"Ah, well! I am afraid you price the horse a little too high."

"Not at all! We value the horse at £5,000, and the stakes of the "Two Thousand" at £5,000 more."

"And who the deuce tells you he is going to win that race?"

"Well, you see," rejoined Grenville, smiling,

"we are guided there entirely by your own opinion. We are credibly informed that you have thought it worth while to invest a large sum of money on his chance, and we have a high opinion of your judgment in such matters."

Pearman paused. He was a shrewd man, and he could not help being struck by the ability with which his opponent had got up his case. "Suppose I let you take the horse?" he said at length.

"Even then he is a valuable horse, and worth just now a fictitious price. There would be people who would give pretty nearly that sum to insure his not starting for that particular race."

"I give you credit, Mr. Rose," replied Pearman at length. "I'll sign a release of the mortgage, with this proviso, that my engagement with Miss Denison remains as it was."

"I have told you already that that question is totally aloof, and must be held entirely distinct from the claim of heriot. It is a point upon which I am not empowered to enter, and have nothing to say."

Gravelle Rose is proving himself a master of casuistry. Though not his mission or interest to speak on that subject, I think it was one he had a good deal to say to.

"Then there is nothing more to be said," observed Pearman, rising.

"I am afraid not. It would be better on both sides, I fancy, if we had come to terms. We shall probably not make quite so much—that we must take our chance of. You will certainly lose a good deal more."

"By ———, you're right! I'll do it."

"Depend upon it, it's your cheapest way out of the scrape, and I hope Coriander will speedily recoup you. Excuse me for one moment, and I'll fetch the release. I had it drawn up in the event of your taking a sensible view of the transaction;" and Grenville left the room.

"All right, my pet, so far," he exclaimed, as he entered Denison's private sanctuary, where Maude was anxiously waiting him. "Pen and ink, quick!" And seizing one of the telegram slips, he wrote rapidly:

"To Mrs. Hudson, Paper Buildings, Temple. From Grenville Rose, Xminster. Shall be home to-night: have something for dinner."

"There, fold that up, and send it off directly to the telegram office. No time to be lost, Maude."

"Well, I don't see much in that," retorted Maude.

"What a gourmand you must be, Gren!"

"Never mind. Where's that deed?—ah, here. I'll explain it all to you afterwards."

"And my note?" she said shyly, holding it up.

"Neither you nor it will be wanted to-day, I think. But come back here when you have seen James off."

"Perhaps you'd rather I should never send it?" she inquired, half-timidly, half-coquettishly.

"Maude, be serious now, please. You may tease me as much as you like afterwards."

She said nothing, but flitted from the room on her errand.

Grenville Rose, armed with the deed of release of the mortgage, and a similar acquittance of the heriot claim, all drawn up in due legal form, quickly returned to Pearman.

"Here," he said, "is your acquittance, signed by my uncle. If you will sign the release, I'll hand it over to you. Shall I ring for a servant as a second witness to your signature?"

Pearman nodded assent, and upon the appearance of the butler, scrawled his name across the parchment, to which the witnesses signed their attestation. He then placed the acquittance in his pocket, took up his hat, and departed, without further demand for an interview with Maude.

Not that the heriot business had for one second put it out of his mind. No; to do him justice, he looked upon the probable rupture of his engagement as a very serious item in the losses the discovery of

that mouldy old parchment had entailed upon him. If he did not love her, he admired her extremely, and looked forward to the connection with great eagerness. But he felt quite convinced that to have moved any further than he had already done would be simply to cancel it at once. He did not wish that. It was but a slender hold, he knew. Still, another shuffle of the pack might change all the hands once more. That slight link was better than none at all.

Thus meditating, he drove home, and having ordered his phaeton to wait while he wrote a couple of letters, to save the post, entered the house. In about half-an-hour he reappeared, stepped into the carriage, and drove to Xminster Station. His wishing to write those letters at Mannersley had caused him to make a considerable detour to the station from Glinn, Harold Denison's place lying, though off the direct road, somewhere about half way between Mannersley and the railway. On arrival there he went into the telegraph office, and despatched a message. The clerk and Pearman were upon rather intimate relations. The late owner of Mannersley had employed the electric wire pretty freely. His son, also, was wont to use it a good deal. The latter, moreover, constantly sent the clerk game in the season,—very often told him he had invested a

sovereign for him on one of his horses that he thought was likely to win. It may be conceived that the conductor of the telegraph at Xminster held Mr. Sam Pearman in high esteem.

"You'll be going up by the six train, I suppose, sir? Only half-past three now, but I expect you're going home again first."

"Just so. I want to have about an hour at the paddocks first."

"One last look at the crack, eh, sir? Win, won't he, though they do take strange liberties with him in the betting?"

"He's very well, and 'll make some of them open their eyes and shut their mouths before many days are over."

"Well, you'll have company up, sir—Mr. Grenville Rose, from Glinn; he's agoing by that train. Know him, Mr. Pearman, I suppose."

"D——n him, yes. I do know him," said Pearman, as he thought over their recent interview.

"Beg pardon, sir; didn't know you didn't like him; he's usually reckoned a nice gentleman."

"How do you know he's going to town?"

"Because he sent a message to say so."

"What, a telegram? How long ago?"

"About an hour and a half: it was about two o'clock."

"That was the time I left Glinn, and his telegram left Xminster then. Hum! It must have left Denison's while I was there," thought Pearman. "What the devil could it have been about? I say, what was Mr. Rose's message—*exactly*?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but, you know, we ain't allowed _____"

"Yes, of course, I know; there's a sovereign for you—go on."

"Well, it can't be of any consequence, and you won't let out I told you, Mr. Pearman," said the clerk, as his hand closed on the gold coin. "It was only this: 'To Mrs. Hudson, Paper Buildings, Temple. From Grenville Rose, Xminster. I shall be home to-night: have some dinner.'"

"That was all, you're sure?"

"Every word, I'll take my oath."

"Thank you; keep a place for me by the six train;" and Pearman drove off to see his
norscs

It was a very simple message, but the owner of Coriander had been quite long enough on the turf to know that a telegram may represent anything but what it appears to say. It disquieted him much. He wished that he had driven straight to the station instead of home to Mannersley; he might have written his letters there, and his own telegram would

have been off much sooner. In the meanwhile here he was at the paddocks.

"Well, Martin?" he inquired, as his trainer came out to meet him; "how are they all going on?"

"Well as can be, sir. Coriander did two nice canters and a good mile and a quarter gallop, to wind up with, this morning. No horse can be doing better. But they tell me they're laying against him in London, as if something was the matter:" and the trainer glanced inquiringly at his master.

"Something *has been* the matter, Martin—too long a matter to tell you at present; but everything is now satisfactorily arranged. But I want to talk to you about those two-year-olds; so, come inside."

After a lengthened conference with his trainer, Pearman returned to the station. Grenville Rose was a fellow-traveller with him, and they even occupied the same carriage, but beyond a few words of recognition, no conversation passed between them.

Upon entering the Theatine, the first thing Pearman saw in the hall, on casting his eye at the notice-board containing the latest news, was that Coriander was once more first favourite for the Two Thousand, at seven to two, taken freely.

"Done again," he muttered, "somehow. And I believe that telegram and Rose are at the bottom of it. Curse him!"



CHAPTER XIII.

CONCERNING MRS. HUDSON.

WE must now revert to what Mrs. Hudson did upon receipt of her telegram—as harmless, apparently, as “the pork chops and tomato sauce” of Pickwick’s immortal history. Yet even in that case “great events from trivial causes sprang.” That lady is destined to be as much disturbed in a monetary point of view as Mrs. Bardell; but infinitely more to her own advantage.

Mrs. Hudson was lounging pleasantly enough in an arm-chair, reading the diurnal literature of her country in that abode of comfort, bliss, and intelligence, yclept Paper Buildings, when that most domestic of telegrams reached her. That she was attired in a morning-coat, neat trousers, unimpeachable boots, and had a cigar in her mouth, will

scarcely astonish the reader, who has probably already surmised that Silky Dallison represented that lady.

"Glad!" he exclaimed, after reading the message, "what a cross it looks like. But I must be off at once, to see Plyart. Twenty minutes to three; just catch him before he goes down to Tattersall's." Mr. Dallison was a man of decision; he was into a hansom and at the door of the Victoria Club in something less than ten minutes. His conference with the book-maker was short, and then they separated, both to make their way to the great Turf Exchange at Knightsbridge.

The remarkable feature of the betting on the Two Thousand that afternoon was the extraordinary advance of Coriander. From very long odds offered against him, he rose in the course of the day to be once more first favourite; reaching very nearly to his original price of ten days back. From the opening of the rooms Dallison was very eager in his offers to back the horse, while it might have been also noticed that Mr. Plyart accepted the long odds against Coriander, "Just to cover himself," as he said, "having laid rather heavily against him." But it quickly permeates through the subscription-room that the horse is being backed in earnest, and when, about half-past four, Pearman's accredited

agent began also to put money on the horse, the *furor* became intense.

The Ring, or stockbrokers of the turf, like their brethren of the eastern exchange, with all their acuteness, are marvellously like sheep in times of panic. The leaders at both places can increase or depreciate property pretty much at their pleasure. As there is, of course, money to be made by such fluctuations, it can scarcely be wondered at that they do it. But why should the one be deemed virtuous and respectable, and the other the contrary? There is little to choose between the scandals of the two betting rings.

Grenville Rose, upon Pearman's departure, had carried the release in triumph to the squire. Harold Denison was jubilant beyond measure; free from his difficulties, and, to use his own expression, "out of the hands of those bloodsuckers the Pearmans." The hopes Grenville had raised had influenced him in his influence with Sam Pearman, and, if a little sarcastic in his retorts, the bitter cynicism of his nature had toned down rather upon that occasion. Rose now thought it time to do a little work for himself; so, without more ado, plunged *in medias res*, reverted to his passion for his cousin, and solicited his uncle's permission for their engagement.

Harold Denison was a good deal taken aback. It must be borne in mind that he had not received the slightest hint of this in any way beforehand, and to say that he was pleased now he did hear it, would be very far from the truth. He liked his nephew, perhaps, as far as it was in his selfish nature to like anybody; but he still thought that Maude, with her personal attractions, ought to marry money or rank, if not both. Still, at the present moment, he was virtually indebted to his nephew for £10,000—a circumstance little likely to help him in the long run, as men of Harold Denison's calibre generally hate most heartily those to whom they are deeply beholden. However, he had not come to that yet, and the way his nephew had outwitted Pearman pleased his cynic and vindictive nature much.

"Foolish business, Gren, very, I'm afraid," he replied at length. "Nobody I'd sooner give her to, providing she's willing to take you."

"My dear uncle, Maude and I ——"

"Pooh! You needn't go on about that. I never doubted that you and Maude had settled it all before you did me the honour to consult me. But what are you to live on? Your £400 a year won't keep a wife, Gren, and I can't help you."

"No, but we can wait a bit: we are both young,

and I shall be making two or three hundred a year at my profession very soon."

"Nonsense, boy; I know the law. I thoroughly believe you to be clever, and have no doubt the money will come in course of time, but it's slow work—very. Long engagements are not judicious."

"But this is not to be so very long; and Maude is good to wait a couple of years or so for me."

"A couple of years," smiled the squire. "What did the fee-book say last year. Fifty pounds?"

"Not quite, very near it, though."

"I'm afraid you'll find it will take all two years to double it. I don't doubt your doing well at last, but it takes time, it takes time. Still, Gren, I'll not gainsay the match, and if at the end of next year you can see your way into something like £300 a year, exclusive of what you have, make a wedding of it, if you like."

"Ten thousand thanks, uncle. This case of yours will find me practice, see if it don't. I have no intention of hiding my light under a bushel. I'll take very good care, through my friends, the case is well talked of. Only wait till the Two Thousand is over, and see what details the sporting papers shall have of it! Good-bye. I will just run up and see my aunt and Maude, and then I'm off."

Grenville dashed into the drawing-room, where he found Mrs. Denison and his cousin.

"I'm just off to town, aunt, and have come to wish you good-bye, and tell you I'm to be your son-in-law, after all."

"Don't believe him, my mother," laughed Maude, her eyes dancing with fun. We know better than that, don't we? We mustn't detain him, or he'll be too late for his dinner. You greedy thing; you won't live if you gourmandise so ——"

"Come here, Gren," said Mrs. Denison; "has my husband consented to your marrying Maude?"

"Yes, aunt, as soon as I've got bread-and-cheese enough to feed her on."

"My dear boy, I'm so glad! I was obliged to be your enemy once, Gren—I couldn't help myself; but I'd rather you took her than anyone."

"Oh you, mother!" cried Maude; "and he says he'll feed me on bread-and-cheese, and I like, I like —strawberries and cream."

"Sad thing, aunt, but I suppose I'd better break off the match at once. Better that than come to a separate maintenance, you know. Bread-and-cheese is a good lasting dish, but how she's to get through the winters I don't know, on what she proposes."

"Ah well, never mind," laughed Maude; "she's yours now, and won't have a separate maintenance."

You'll have to feed her some way, and you can't guess how she eats. When are you going, Gren?"

"In a very few minutes. I'm going to walk; will you come with me? Good-bye, aunt. Don't be afraid. I won't run away with her, at all events till strawberries are well in, and threepence a pottle."

"Listen: were lovers like that in your day, mother? I used to dream, a little while back, that when you had a lover, it was all you could do to keep him from running away with you. Now I'm getting quite clever about it, and know that Gren would always much prefer to leave me behind than his portmanteau."

"Come away, Maude, and let's see if we can shut it; you know we always have a deal of trouble about that."

"Oh yes, I always found you and Thomas despairing over it, and it takes all my ingenuity to make those last three or four packages fit in. Don't you think he's making a wife of me, mother, a little before he's entitled to?"

"Go away, you foolish children; I am tired of your *badinage*. You can quarrel and make up all the way to the station."

The refractory portmanteau was soon reduced to subjection under Maude's clever auspices, and then

the two cousins walked across the fields to the station.

"Your father's given you to me, Maude, as soon as I can get together an income that we can live upon."

She might be coquettish before her mother, but she was meek enough to her lover when they were alone together.

"I hope I shall be a good wife to you, Gren. You know I'm not extravagant, however I may laugh about it."

"No, my darling, I know you better; and if we have to begin with a little, I hope you'll be able to spend lots of money before long."

"I never had any money to spend," said the girl, gravely. "I've often had to want a five-pound note, both for myself and my poor people in the village."

"And will have again, pet. Wanting money is the normal condition of ninety-nine hundredths of civilised humanity. But you must turn back now, you have come far enough. Good-bye, and God bless you," said Rose, as he clasped her in his arms. "Mine now, for ever, isn't it?"

"Yes, Gren. Yours or no one's," she replied, as she lifted her lips shyly to his. "Please write."

"Every day, dearest. Good-bye;" and, with one more kiss, Grenville Rose tore himself away.

How he travelled up to town in the same carriage with Pearman we have already seen. On his arrival at Waterloo Station he jumped into a cab, and proceeded at once to the Temple. On entering his rooms the first thing that caught his eye was the figure of Silky Dallison, who, comfortably ensconced in the easiest chair in the room, was making, apparently, some abstruse calculations on a piece of paper, and referring frequently for guidance to a gaily-bound betting-book.

"All right, old fellow," he said, in return to Grenville's greeting. "Wanted to have a talk to you; knew you would come up by that train; told the old party to get food for two at half-past seven—wants just ten minutes. Go and wash your hands, while I finish what I am about."

After the "bit of fish and beefsteak" that constitute an ordinary bachelor dinner in chambers, the two began to smoke.

"Now," said Dallison, "'shall be back to dinner' of course meant, as we agreed it should, that Pearman had yielded to your terms. I was off to Plyart directly I got that message, and we have had a busy afternoon of it. We rather woke up the subscription-room at Knightsbridge, I flatter myself. From being an outsider in the betting, we brought Coriander back to 7 to 2, and made him once more

first favourite. I told you we had Pearman in a hole, and we had. I suppose you got a lot of money out of him ? ”

“ Yes, indeed ; we made him pay £10,000 to let off our claim.” And then Grenville recounted his interview with Pearman.

“ Very good ; then he’s now absolute master of the horse again. Of course, exactly what I expected from your telegram. Now I’ll tell you what I’ve done. In the first place, I laid, between us, or rather Plyart did for us, £3,300 to £1,200 against Coriander ; that was before he was driven back in the betting : of course that left us to win £1,200 if he was beat or didn’t start. After getting your telegram I went down to Tattersall’s, and, with Plyart’s assistance, got that whole £1,200 on the horse at long odds. We now stand to win, between us, £10,170 if Coriander wins the Two Thousand, and just quits if he loses. Not a bad book, Grenville ? ”

“ By Jove ! no ; and he’s a good chance, hasn’t he ? ”

“ Yes, on previous running, wonderful. We know Pearman has backed him to win him a lot of money. It’s not likely he would have paid you £10,000 to-day unless he was very confident about his chance. To wind up with, his own commissioner

backed him to-day for a good bit of money, although he had to take shortish odds, owing to our having appropriated all the long prices against the colt."

Grenville's eyes sparkled, though he said nothing, but smoked on in silence for a minute or two. Yes, if that *coup* should come off, he might marry Maude at once!

Dallison had regarded him intently. Suddenly he broke silence—

"Of course—what a fool I am! I saw your eye flash up, and then you plunged into a reverie. I had forgotten the stake you told me you had on this, when you first spoke to me about it. Whether it's been any good to go so far, of course I don't know; but you stand as fair a chance as a man can do of winning £5,080 next week, if that will help you at all. There's no certainty about anything in this world—about how long its been a world, or about how long we've been preying on each other in it. Practically, mind, we are as much cannibals as ever, and eat each other up with as much alacrity as the Feejee Islanders. A good heavy city swindle gulps us down much as a whale takes herrings; but there's plenty of pike about, who do their cannibalism one at a time, and not by the shoal. Pearman *père* was a pike of renown; in fact, he might have aspired to the dignity of a shark, if he

hadn't been of a retiring disposition, and ever anxious to hide his light under a bushel. Pearman *fil's* has a fair dash of the pike about him, too. Which way he can make most money out of Coriander I don't know; but I should think, by winning; and if I'm right in my conjecture, bar accidents, we shall win our money, Gren."

"And if it is the other way?"

"Sha'n't lose it, thank goodness! But I'm afraid if his book makes up a few hundreds better on the lose, Coriander will not run up to his previous performances. We've done pretty well; win or lose, we stand a big stake to nothing. Good-night."

Grenville smoked and mused far into the night. Yes, he had been playing for high stakes lately, and winning game after game. Let this only come off, and he should have fairly won his sweet cousin. Then the thought came into his head that he must see it, and then it flashed across him that Maude must be with him. How he was to manage it, he didn't know. As inspirations flash across mankind, so do superstitions.

Maude had had her *sortilège*, he had now his; Coriander's winning the 'Two Thousand depended upon him and his *fiancée* being there to see.

"Ridiculous!" you'll say. There is pretty well as much romance and superstition going about the

world as heretofore; but our nineteenth-century training teaches us, above all things, not to lay ourselves open to ridicule. We may inwardly admit such things; we don't acknowledge them. Still, the age that recognises "spirit rapping" need not altogether turn up its nose at *sortilège*.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE RACE FOR THE TWO THOUSAND.

THE classic heath is crowded ; ay, over-crowded. The carriages stand four or five deep next the ropes. The horsemen feel themselves overwhelmed by the chariots. Jealous *habitués* of long standing, glare disdainfully as huge luncheon hampers meet their offended eyes ; while the despairing tones of an old idolater, who, in accents of bitterest anguish, exclaims, "Same three infernal machines, covered with three pigeon-pies and Guinness's stout, upon my word !" strikes chilly on the heart of the old Newmarket man.

Yes, there's no doubt about it. I don't say the world, but the civilised world, is not big enough. To use an Americanism, "we're crowded out." Everybody goes everywhere nowadays. If you

happen to have mixed much in the world there is no place of which you can predicate, "Well, thank Heaven, I can't meet anyone I know there." Personally, I can simply affirm that my particular aversions always turn up on such occasions. At the Grand Mulets, the top of the Pyramids, on the crest of Table Mountain, or in the depths of the Catacombs, I should be on the look-out for them. I consider them as part of the scenery; the quassia cup from which I quaff the nutty sherry of existence. I shudder, and submit to them accordingly. I hear Herne Bay spoken well of in this respect. The Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, folks say, are not socially crowded; and there must be some retired spots about Lake Nyanza at present. The latter, of course, won't last. Steamers, ay, penny ones probably, will ply there before five years are over, and the Viceroy of Egypt will probably have established a Baden on its banks, out of compliment to the prudery of Europe. I suppose we shouldn't mind gambling on another continent.

I wonder how often the world has had its virtuous paroxysms about gambling, and its fits of indignation about money lending. Legislate! Yes, you may legislate, on both subjects. What is the result? Legislation simply diverts gambling into other channels. Laws against usury have failed since

the world began, or rather, since our present knowledge of it began. If we must not cock-fight we can race; if we must not race we can row, or draw straws, or bet upon the weather. You may pass what laws you choose anent usury; the more harm you do. The fool to borrow and the shark to lend will always exist; you merely increase the percentage. Both are evils which you cannot eradicate. The next best thing is to keep them under surveillance. Besides, how you increase demand by a prohibitory tariff. It is wrong to bet; that alone gives zest to the pursuit; but make it illegal, and you give a real impetus to the business. Free-trade ruined smuggling. If the street fountains played spirits, and a vexatious tax was placed on water, we should undergo a teetotal revolution to which Father Mathew's movement would be child's play.

In a carriage very close to the cords are Harold Denison, Maude, and Grenville Rose—or rather, I should say, were, insomuch as they had arrived there together; but though Denison had for some years eschewed the greensward and its fatal seductions, of course there were numerous old friends whom he had known well in the days that the sky blue and silver braid (his colours) was prominent at most large race meetings. He had naturally drawn

off to chat over old times with some of them, and left Maude in charge of her cousin.

The girl was in a state of the greatest excitement. She had never before seen a race of any kind. It was a bright day; but warm, except in the July meeting, it never is on Newmarket Heath. Thanks to her father's experience, Maude was heavily shawled, and therefore comfortable. In the last few minutes Rose had confided to her what a big stake he stood to win on Coriander, "Though, Maude, recollect, I sha'n't be a penny the worse if he loses."

"Oh, Gren, how can you stand still? I can hardly, as it is, though it is you who are to win, and not me."

"My darling, you are as much interested as I am. I never did bet before; I never shall again. Can't you guess why I have this time?"

"I think so," she replied, as her face flushed. "It's for me, is it not?"

"Yes, Maude; if Coriander wins, I can claim you from your father at once; if he don't—well, you will wait while I work, won't you?"

"You know I will. I'm yours whenever you come for me," whispered the girl; "and as long as we may write, I shall never ——" and she paused.

“What?” inquired her cousin.

“Don’t ask me?—well, never be as unhappy as I have been.”

Grenville pressed the little hand that rested in his, but said nothing; in which he showed great discretion. In love-making, silence is often more effective than conversation.

But the noise of the bursting cork is hushed in Jarvis’s—the ring is deserted. Flys and horsemen tear across to where the cords, placed in funnel shape, indicate the finest of the Rowley miles. Every one is on the *qui vive* to see the result of the first great three-year-old race of the season. Carefully have the horses been scrutinised in the Birdcage and elsewhere, and the scattered ring, from the foot of the Jockey Club stand and from amidst the carriages, still shriek forth spasmodic offers against outsiders. Grenville has never left his cousin’s side. As he has already said, the turf was a great mystery to him. All he knows—and this is derived from Dallison—is, that Coriander is first favourite, and that Fauxpas and The Saint are each backed for a great deal of money, and that the Lightning Colt is a dangerous outsider.

“Now, Maude, stand up on the seat. Are the glasses right? Try.”

“Quite ; I can see beautifully.”

“Very well ; now repeat what I have taught you. What are the colours ?”

“Coriander, black and white hoops ; Fauxpas, green and white braid ; The Saint, cherry and black cap ; and—and, oh dear, I forget that Lightning thing.”

“Mazarine blue ; don’t forget again. Do you see those two bushes ? As soon as we hear they are off, bring your glasses to bear on those. Wait till you catch the horses in their field, and then follow them till you don’t want glasses.”

“Yes, Gren ; but my hand shakes so. I wish you hadn’t told me about all that money if Coriander wins. Oh dear, why don’t they start ? What are they waiting for ?”

Ah me ! faces are a study, the five minutes before the flag falls for a great race. Emotion, it is true, is very *mauvaise ton*, but the teeth will go through the lip, or the mouth will twitch, and the hand that holds the race-glass will shake a little on these occasions, when the possessors are involved in high stakes on the result. Once over, and as a rule it would be difficult to tell whether a man had lost much or little. Winners look jubilant, losers bland at the hoisting of numbers. To study faces, use

your eyes while the horses still cluster at the starting-post. Still I recollect two heavy losers on the celebrated Derby of '67: the one as *nonchalant* as ever, but the other looked as if stricken with ague—and, for all I know, may have been; it was cold enough.

Suddenly is seen tumult amongst the distant horsemen, who have gone down some way to witness the start, and almost before Maude can realise that they are all tearing towards her, the fierce shriek of "They're off!" announces that the race for the Two Thousand has begun. She has barely time to get the bushes within the field of her glasses when half-a-dozen of the gay silken jackets pass them. Flushed, panting, excited, and utterly unaccustomed to the thing, Maude grinds her little white teeth in her agitation, as she finds they have passed the point, more like the glimpse of a kaleidoscope than anything else; then, for a second, she can't find them again. "Oh, Gren!" she gasps, "which is Coriander? I forget! Was it blue, or black and white hoops? I've lost them. Oh dear, that green thing will win! Oh, which is Coriander?" And there was a slight gurgle in Maude's throat.

"The Saint wins! No, he don't; he's beat! Fauxpas wins! No, the Lightning Colt! Fauxpas"

—when, sharp and shrill as a clarion above the Babel, came Sam Pearman's cry of "Coriander wins, for a monkey!" Coriander wins. Coriander,—in a walk, and the black and white hoops glide past the Judge's chair a clever length in front.

Grenville draws a big breath. "Is it true?" —and he glares anxiously at the telegraph-board. From where he is it is impossible to tell for certain, though he thinks the favourite won. Hurrah! Up goes the mystic 7 that represents Coriander on the cards; and, with a yell, Grenville sends his hat into the air. Even as he does so, he feels that Maude leans wondrous heavy on his shoulder; he turns just in time to hear a low gurgling sound, and catch his cousin in his arms. She has fainted. He lays her back in the carriage, and sends one of the innumerable lads that infest a racecourse in hot pursuit of water. Meanwhile he, in his ignorance and confusion, bathes her temples with sherry from a big flask. It has the desired effect, as if it were a more scientific, or, at all events, more generally recognised remedy, and ere the myrmidon returns with water, Maude has come to herself with a choking sob or two.

"Oh, Gren, I didn't—I don't—I shall be well in a minute." And after drinking, first a little sherry, and then a little water, Maude, with rather pale

cheeks, began to wonder how she could have been so foolish.

"I got so excited about it, Gren; I couldn't help it. You shouldn't have told me what a lot of money you might win. Besides, I never saw a race before."

"Never mind, you are all right now. We'll go home as soon as we can catch your father; there's nothing else to see—not for us, at least, darling. I've won you now, Maude!"

"No," said the girl, with a smile, and a slight pressure of her little hand; "you did that before. But where's your hat?"

"I don't know," said Grenville, looking very confused. "I threw it up in the air when the horse won, and then you fainted, and I never thought of it again. Looks awkward, don't it."

"Oh," laughed Maude, "I'm so glad. Why you were as bad as me. I think we had better go home, Gren; we are not fit to go racing. We haven't the requisite control of our feelings, and make shows of ourselves."

But though the hat, a little the worse for its aerial excursion, was speedily returned by some jackal of the heath, Harold Denison was not so easily come at, and the cousins were perforce doomed

to see the day out. Though I doubt whether they ever saw another race, they bore themselves most resignedly, and I fancy passed a tolerably pleasant two hours. A gentleman on a neat hack, after a moment's hesitation, pulled up at their carriage. Lifting his hat to Maude, he nodded cheerily to Rose, and leaning over, murmured—

“No end of congratulation. What a *coup* ! I'm very well satisfied ; but, Gren, you have played for high stakes, and I suppose I may say have won them. Adieu !” And with another glance and raising of his hat to Maude, he cantered off.

“Who was that ?” she inquired.

“Dallison, who did all my betting for me.”

“And did he know ?”

“He knew what that £5,000 meant to me. He's right, Maude. I have been playing high stakes, and to think that I should win all.”

Mr. Denison turned up in the most jubilant spirits. He had had a delightful day, and won a hundred and odd pounds, he told them. “Don't think I am going on with it, Grenville, but as I had come to see ‘The Guineas’ run for once more, I determined to risk my pony on it, and backed the horse that had already been such a good friend to me ; and as that was successful I invested two or

three more ten-pound notes on the strength of my first win, so that my gains mounted up, my selections having proved successful."

Within twenty-four hours Grenville Rose had had a long confabulation with his uncle, and succeeded in convincing him that he was, thanks to the additional £5,000, in a position to marry his cousin at once: he could make up now £600 a year, and he was sure business would shortly come to him. Denison demurred a little, but he certainly was under some obligation to his nephew about that mortgage. The domestic current, too, ran strong in Grenville's favour; so, after a little, he yielded, saying that "if they thought fit to begin the world on that income, he had no more to say, further than that they could expect but little help from him in his lifetime."

Maude and Grenville recked little of that, and in three months' time they were married; and one of the handsomest wedding presents Maude received was, strange enough to say, from Sam Pearman, with a very correct note, to the effect that, "Forgetting all the past, he trusted Miss Denison would still consider him as a friend and well-wisher."

Moreover, so immensely struck was that gentleman with Grenville's acuteness in the prosecution of the heriot claim, that he threw a considerable

amount of his own and friends' legal business into Rose's hands; and three or four years after that memorable Two Thousand you seldom saw a horse case in which Grenville was not employed. Briefs, too, fell thick from other sources; the Coriander story was bruited about, and the attorneys pronounced it smart, clever—very, and endorsed their opinions practically.

The picture of that distinguished racehorse may be seen in the dining-room at Mannersley, and Pearman often contemplates it, and soliloquises as he does so, "Yes; you cost me £10,000 hard cash, and the prettiest girl in England; but you won the Guineas and the Derby—you did."

Over Rose's study mantelpiece hangs a print of that same celebrity. Deep in his papers in the evening, sometimes, when work is so plentiful that it becomes hard to grapple with, Maude will glide softly in, and say, "Come. Gren; tea is in. Come and drink Coriander's health—the dear old horse that gave us to each other." And he yields to the voice of the charmer, and, to the benefit of his health, enjoys a twenty minutes' romp with a sturdy little boy of some three years old or so, who, having been once taken by his mother into Court, has determined on being a judge almost immediately.

It is a solemn compact between Maude and Mr.

Pearman that when anything happens to Coriander—who, having much distinguished himself, has now retired into domestic life—one of his illustrious feet is to be placed at her disposal.

The squire is still muddling on, but, thanks to an occasional look-up from Grenville, and a change of bailiffs, continues to about make both ends meet. As for Mrs. Denison, with her temperament, cannot you fancy the delight she has in a visit to or from her darling daughter, and with a couple of grandchildren to pet and spoil?

THE END.

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